

**SOCIALISM
AND
CULTURE**

Socialism and Culture

**A Collection
of Articles**

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Introduction

"I find myself ~~woridfinig~~ ~~Trinité~~ and more frequently whether ~~communism~~ does not presuppose renunciation of some of the advantages of civilisation, denial of some of the hard-won prerogatives of the individual, and lastly, whether it does not presuppose a high level of universal morality such as is extremely difficult to achieve? Certainly, if so, it is still very fine, but it thereby ceases to be a necessary product of human development. It will have to be implanted with the same expectancy of success as in any experiments or innovations forcibly introduced into society."¹

Thus the Russian literary critic Pavel Annenkov—a man extremely sensitive to the spiritual currents of his time and well-acquainted with the intellectual life of the 1840s in both Russia and Western Europe—once shared his doubts with Marx. The main conclusion one might be tempted to draw from such questions is that Annenkov had very hazy notions about dialectical materialism. But we mustn't be too hard on him, for he was by no means alone in his illusions about communism, its "introduction" to social life and, especially, the threat it was supposed to represent to "the advantages of civilisation", "the prerogatives of the individual", humanism, culture and so on.

In the 1840s, scientific socialism was forcing its way through a great multitude of "socialisms", from Christian utopian to petty-bourgeois radical brands, to extract itself in the same way (and for the same reasons) as the revolutionary proletariat

emerged from *the general mass* of workingmen, the general democratic masses, as an independent historical force with a path and purpose of its own. At the same time it is essential to realise that the path of the working class coincides in many respects with that of the general democratic struggle so that the autonomy of the working class does not make its movement sectarian, and also that the two do not coincide in all respects, and thus the revolutionary movement of the proletariat does not become dissolved in that of the general democratic forces. The purpose of the working-class struggle for social emancipation is a universal humanist aim which has long been the dream of the world's greatest minds, and which they have prophesied with varying degrees of clarity. But the task of accomplishing this aim is imposed by the objective laws of history on the revolutionary proletariat aware of their emancipatory mission. This means that in spiritual life (in the sphere of the problems of humanism and culture in particular), the objective historical role of the working class as *the vanguard* of democratic labour requires that the latter's outlook be *raised* to the level of revolutionary proletarian ideology and hence that scientific socialism as the expression of the interests of the working class has not only to free itself from other "socialisms" but also to combat the bourgeois and philistine ideas they contain. One of these is petty-bourgeois egalitarianism.

This idea appears in various forms depending on the concrete conditions of a given historical time, national historical circumstances and so on, and also on the sphere in which a particular ideologist is propounding it. It may appear in the form of pure political radicalism (as was the case,

for example, in France in the eighteen thirties and forties), or in the form of abstract-humanist conceptions (like the German *Wahrsozialismus* of the same period). Yet again it may appear in that curious form of moral-philosophical doctrines in which insistent democratic protest is found in conjunction with religious acquiescence (viz., the later "Tolstoiism").

What in fact Pavel Annenkov was afraid of was the petty-bourgeois idea of egalitarianism. Nor is it simply a matter of its being advanced at that time (as indeed it frequently is to this day) as a communist idea. Annenkov is repelled by the idea of egalitarianism as a litterateur, as an artist.

Balzac, who revealed so brilliantly the whole mechanism of bourgeois egoism, which he regarded as far, far worse than the egoism of the nobility, who while by no means sympathising with the communist movement gave in *The Peasantry* an extremely accurate definition of it ("communism, that living force and practical logic of democracy..."), like Annenkov confused genuine communism with the petty-bourgeois doctrine of egalitarianism and supposed it to be "attacking society", insisting that its aim was "to sap the moral standards of society".²

Heine, that great poet and humanist, and in many respects a profound thinker, who had an equal loathing for the yoke of the sceptre, the power of financial magnates and petty-bourgeois philistinism; Heine, who did so much for the cause of the democratic revolution in Germany and throughout Western Europe, was also frightened of egalitarian democracy. He rejected it partly as an artist whose social views are developed and realised through the special prism

of knowledge of men and human nature, through perception of the world in the spectrum of *beauty* and *humanitarianism*. As a result this eminently correct criticism of *petty-bourgeois* political radicalism which sets out to "save suffering mankind from its most painful torments", but only "at the expense of the last remnants of beauty", which dooms the man to "drag his way around in a hideous hospital coat, in the ash-grey dress of equality", to feed on "the soup of utilitarianism" (while "all inherited joy, all delight, all the sweet scent of flowers, all poetry will be stamped out of life"); this correct criticism of "a society where everyone, tormented by the awareness of his own mediocrity, will strive to drag every higher gift down to the wretched common level"³; this criticism which is still so remarkably applicable to present-day conditions of bourgeois spiritual standardisation on the one hand and Maoism on the other, was sometimes extended by the great poet to . . . communism and its future triumph. The shadow of the enemy, the shadow of *petty-bourgeois* egalitarianism, anti-humanitarian and anti-aesthetic principles, sell in the views of Heine himself, and his artist's soul spoke forth with a martyr's pain: "I made the admission that the future belongs to the Communists with boundless fear and anguish, and—alas! it was not mere simulation . . . their rough hands will destroy all the beautiful marble statues that are so dear to my heart; they will destroy all the fantastic toys and playthings of art that the poet so loved; they will lay waste my laurel groves and plant potatoes there. . . ."⁴

It goes without saying that for a writer of Heine's calibre art was never "toys and playthings", and it was certainly not Marx, with

whom he was friends and whom he so greatly admired, that gave him this idea, but rather the utilitarian programmes of the "secret societies" that abounded in the eighteen thirties and forties. The main thing is that Heine, too, saw petty-bourgeois radicalism (in the sphere of art) as akin to communism. Heine was led astray by false communist ideas mistaking them for the genuine ones. But this, as Marx put it, was a universal-historical mistake.

Meanwhile, it was Marxism which provided the scientific answer to the question with which we are here concerned, namely, what does socialism bring to man, art and culture?

Socio-historical analysis of capitalist society, of its contradictions and evolution, led the founders of scientific socialism to the conclusion that the bourgeois system is *objectively* hostile to the humanistic development of man. The conditions of social existence that produce "the universal struggle of man against man, individual against individual" dehumanise man and make him objectively slave of a single major passion, the passion for enrichment and "possession". This is inevitable in a society based on private property relations. Relations based on bourgeois private property are "*in appearance* the greatest *freedom*", since such a society seems to be the perfect form of "*the independence of the individual*", who "*considers as his own* freedom the movement, no longer curbed or fettered by a common tie or by man, the movement of his alienated life elements, like property, industry, religion, etc., in reality this is the perfection of his slavery and his inhumanity"³. This exposure of that apparent freedom and those illusions of the circumscribed bourgeois mind is in many respects

even more valid today than when Marx and Engels wrote *The Holy Family* over a hundred years ago.

The deeply scientific and passionate Marxist criticism of egalitarian communist ideas and sentiments, or "vulgar communism" as Marx called this trend, is at least as valid today as when it was first made. Marx revealed the bourgeois, or to be more precise, petty-bourgeois nature of "vulgar communism", despite the fact that its adherents were under the impression that egalitarianism is quite the opposite. "This communism," Marx wrote in 1844, "rejecting everywhere the human *personality*, is merely a consistent expression of private property, which is that rejection. Universal *envy* instituted as power represents the hidden form that cupidity takes and in which it only satisfies itself by *another* means. All private property as such feels—at least with regard to *richer* private property—envy and a longing for levelling, so that the latter constitute even the essence of competition. Vulgar communism is simply the consummation of this envy and levelling, based on a *concept* of a certain minimum. It has a *definite limited* standard. That such abolition of private property is by no means its genuine appropriation can be seen from the abstract rejection of the whole world of culture and civilisation, from the return to the *unnatural* simplicity of the *poor* man who has no demands. . . ."6

Marxism proved scientifically that the material prerequisites for the new society are created within capitalist society itself, which is the very reason why this new society, qualitatively different from all former previous societies with class antagonisms, was not merely possible but

inevitable. As Engels wrote of the Industrial Revolution under capitalism: "And it is precisely this industrial revolution which has raised the productive power of human labour to such a high level that—for the first time in the history of mankind—the possibility exists, given a rational division of labour among all, of producing not only enough for the plentiful consumption of all members of society and for an abundant reserve fund, but also of leaving each individual sufficient leisure so that what is really worth preserving in historically inherited culture—science, art, forms of intercourse—may not only be preserved but converted from a monopoly of the ruling class into the common property of the whole of society, and may be further developed. And here is the decisive point: as soon as the productive power of human labour has risen to this height, every excuse disappears for the existence of a ruling class. After all, the ultimate basis on which class differences were defended was always: there must be a class which need not plague itself with the production of its daily subsistence, in order that it may have time to look after the intellectual work of society. This talk, which up to now had its great historical justification, has been cut off at the root once and for all by the Industrial Revolution of the last hundred years. The existence of a ruling class is becoming daily more and more a hindrance to the development of industrial productive power, and equally so to that of science, art and especially of forms of cultural intercourse."⁷

Some may feel that this general prognosis based chiefly on study of the logic of previous special development has not been borne out by the

subsequent course of history. To begin with, the bourgeoisie remains the ruling class in the industrially developed countries of the West. Moreover, capitalism is playing an active role in the new scientific and technological revolution which is now in progress, while in art the big question remains as to whether the art of the Western countries has really regressed compared to the 19th century.

Marxism is not the Mosaic law, and does not regard its conclusions to be final and immutable. As a science (and the ideology of a class uninterested by its very nature in any dogma or illusions), Marxism requires the constant checking of its theses against the changing conditions of the historical process. Thus Lenin, revealing the laws of development of the imperialist stage of capitalism, showed that the earlier Marxist thesis that the success of socialist revolution depended on its triumph in several highly developed industrialised countries simultaneously was no longer valid in the conditions that obtained by the time he was writing. Marx himself only gradually developed and substantiated his doctrine of communism, his theory of two stages, the socialist and the communist proper, and the connection and difference between them.

Let us dwell for a moment on the "refutations" of Engels's forecast.

There are many *concrete historical* reasons why the capitalists have retained their position as ruling class in the highly developed countries of the West, which need not concern us here. However, the present disintegration of the world imperialist system greatly reducing the sphere of capitalist dominion in the world would seem to confirm rather than refute Engels.

clearly demonstrated its hostility to humanism. That is why it has become pseudo-art, the imitation of, and surrogate for, art, appearing in primitive mass culture, in the form of comics, sexuality and so on, and also apparent in the sphere of art that is frankly formalist and has pretensions to profundity. We can see that the present-day bourgeoisie, the cleverer bourgeois ideologists, as well as "feeding" bourgeois art proper, establishment art, sometimes support and "feed" the individualist "rebels", aesthetic radicals as regards form—but only as regards form!—since such revolt is completely harmless to the ruling bourgeoisie and is anyway essentially alien to the democratic masses and their real struggle. In this way the bourgeoisie is still able to achieve occasional success. But this change of strategy and tactics in the cultural policy of the ruling bourgeoisie is also an indirect testimony to the correctness of Engels's forecast.

However, by far the most important confirmation of the correctness of this forecast is the emergence in the present century of a powerful authoritative *socialist* culture, able "even within the framework of bourgeois society" to "break out of bourgeois slavery and merge with the movement of the really advanced and thoroughly revolutionary class".⁹

In 1913, in his "Critical Remarks on the National Question", Lenin noted that in every nation there existed two cultures: the bourgeois, conservative, representing the dominant force in cultural life, and its opposite, "*elements of democratic and socialist culture*", since "in every nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism".¹⁰ This

fundamental tenet of Marxism-Leninism is perfectly applicable to contemporary Western culture, the democratic and socialist elements having already acquired a nation-wide scale and significance in several capitalist countries.

In the socialist countries of Europe (in the majority of them, and especially in the Soviet Union) anti-bourgeois, socialist culture, having imbibed all that is of value in the experience of democratic literature and art, has become the only (or dominant) culture of the masses freed from social oppression and inequality . . .

To return to our original subject—the fears of certain 19th-century writers about the "anti-humanitarian" nature of future socialism—we can now say quite definitely that history, subsequent historical experience taken as a whole, has shown that these fears were unwarranted. The history of socialism, the history of the Soviet Union, abounding in difficulties successfully overcome, including wars forced on the country by the capitalist world, has shown that it is socialism which makes genuine humanity and truly humane culture the property of the broadest working masses, that it is socialism which advances the triumph of the ideals of a harmoniously developed human personality and the realisation of these ideals.

One of the major immediate tasks of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the sphere of ideology is "to ensure the all-round, harmonious development of the individual; to create a truly rich spiritual culture". This task is specifically mentioned in the Party Programme. This task and the concrete measures for accomplishing it were spoken of with great ardour and scientific realism at the recent 24th Congress.¹⁵

the CPSU. "A great project—the building of communism—cannot be advanced without a harmonious development of man himself. Communism is inconceivable without a high level of culture, education, sense of civic duty and the maturity of people just as it is inconceivable without the appropriate material and technical basis."

The history of socialist construction in USSR and, especially, the reality of present-socialist society in this country, now building communism, proves the inseparability of communist ideology and genuinely humanist spiritual culture, its flourishing.

Such then is the vast scope of the theme of present volume.

Soviet art and literature, born of the first attempt in history to build socialism, is the practical answer to what a society guided by Marxist-Leninist theories brings to humanism, culture and art. The development of Soviet art and literature from 1917 to the present day represents, to use a current term, a dynamic artistic "model" of socialism.

This "model" naturally bears the stamp of the special historical (social and cultural) conditions in which the Soviet Land developed. But the universal significance of Soviet artistic experience is beyond dispute, as is the fact that it is most worthwhile and instructive to become acquainted with it.

The object of the present work is to help the foreign reader gain a knowledge of Soviet art and literature. It is hoped that the roughly chronological presentation of material has been adopted here (although this principle has not been strictly " " " ")

certainly not to be regarded as a straightforward history of Soviet art and literature) will facilitate the achievement of this aim, and that treatment of the different arts and literature separately will likewise serve the same end. There has been no attempt to present an exhaustive study of all the paths of development of the various arts (and indeed some arts do not figure in the book at all, as, for example, architecture, the interpretive performing arts, etc.). The aim has rather been to present the *most typical* processes, and offer a minimum of factual information (names, dates and so on) essential for typology.

As the reader will quickly realize, the articles here collected differ greatly as regards style, compositional scope and the degree of factual detail they contain. However, despite the fact that the various authors express their own personal opinions and make their own individual judgements, a clear unity of basic standpoint is to be found throughout.

A few words about the two underlying motives that run like a golden thread through the whole book.

The first is the attempt to reveal the connection between Soviet artistic practice and socialist humanism. The historical development of the former is directly dependent on the historical development of the latter. Art, which Gorky described as "the study of man", is an embodiment of the humanistic problems of man and society and is at the same time a key to the solution of these problems.

The second *leit-motif* of the collection is the thesis that socialist realism as a stage, direction and artistic method is a historically conditioned product of the lawlike development of social

reality and social awareness and the inner requirements of art.

This can best be seen after examination of the actual concrete material of the history of Soviet literature, cinema, theatre, music and fine arts, and some general conclusions on the question of socialism and culture in a broad historical context are presented in the final article in this collection.

Y. SUROYTSEV

**Socialist
Humanism and
the Formation of
Soviet Literature**



Engendered by the October Revolution, Soviet literature is involved in all the ideological clashes and controversy that centre round the Revolution and the "Russian experiment" as a whole.

There are still many bourgeois ideologists, both avowed and dissimulating, who persist in putting forward the view that the form and meaning of the Revolution were dictated by the fact that the Russia of 1917 was an economically backward country, and insist that the events which took place in Russia have no relevance whatsoever for the industrially advanced, "smoothly evolving" countries of the West. This myth of the peaceful evolution of the West is so blatantly false that to expose it would be a sheer waste of time; anyone with the sketchiest knowledge of the history of the West European countries is aware that its course has been anything but peaceful. The facts are there for everyone to see.

Let us rather turn our attention to the theory that "Russia's backwardness" was the main cause of the Revolution and determined everything about it, including the spiritual phenomena to which it gave birth and, consequently, Soviet literature.

If we fail to take sufficient account of the importance of the concrete historical conditions obtaining in Russia in October 1917 and Russia's preceding socio-economic, political and cultural development, we will find it impossible to understand many aspects of the building of socialism in the Soviet Union, in particular, of Soviet, socialist culture. On the other hand, if we exaggerate the

importance of *these* concrete, historical, specifically Russian factors, we are in danger of overlooking the universal relevance of what has taken place in the Soviet Union, including developments in the sphere of literature. The "model" will be nothing but a self-contained model bearing no relation to socialist culture as a whole.

Lenin and the Party which he led never attempted to deny the fact that pre-revolutionary Russia, the tsarist Empire, had not reached a sufficiently high level of productive forces development for a socialist economy to be established immediately after the working class had taken political power into its hands. Nor did they deny that in terms of the democratic consciousness of the masses, and particularly the overall level of education, learning and culture, Russia was backward compared to many other European countries. While accepting this as indisputable, however, Lenin denied that it was *the decisive* factor in determining the cause and nature of the Revolution. It was without doubt an important factor, but not the decisive one. Lenin's reply to the doctrinaire pseudo-Marxists, whose views are still echoed by bourgeois and revisionist ideologists, was the following: "If a definite level of culture is required for the building of socialism (although nobody can say just what that definite 'level of culture' is, for it differs in every West European country), why cannot we begin by *first* achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?" ("Our Revolution", 1923.)¹¹

The arguments which are advanced in an attempt to refute the universal significance of the



within certain limits or to be more exact, for certain periods of our struggle. We could start illiteracy during the fight for power, while it was necessary to destroy the old state machinery. But are we destroying merely for the sake of destroying? We are destroying for the purpose of creating something better. Illiteracy goes hand in hand with the job of creation." 12

October 1917 demonstrated the progressive, positive nature of socialist revolution and its importance as a turning point in the development of human culture in its broadest sense.

And this means that the October Revolution is also a turning point in the development of world humanism.

The factor which Lenin saw both as "what makes the building of communist society difficult" and at the same time as "a guarantee that it can and will be built" was that the new culture was based on the people, and that the huge democratic mass, educated and organised in accordance with socialist principles, brought about the Revolution and went on to build socialism. This was the concrete realisation and development of Marxist social and ethical ideas, according to which people engaged in the revolutionary transformation of circumstances were themselves transformed in the course of these historical transformations. To be more concrete this means the following, as Lenin put it: "In fact, what distinguishes Marxism from the old, utopian socialism is that the latter wanted to build the new society not from the mass human material produced by blood-stained, sordid, rapacious, shopkeeping capitalism, but from very virtuous men and women reared in special



the Revolution was not a paradoxical reflection of Russia's backwardness, but a reflection of its powerful spiritual striving to overcome this backwardness, a reflection of the strength of its democratic movement. Furthermore, the literature which grew up after the October Revolution and produced the great works that are today acknowledged by everyone not entirely devoid of aesthetic feeling and honesty, is not a sort of "Russian miracle", not a miraculous transformation of backwardness, but the result of this backwardness *being overcome* by the peoples of the Soviet Union, the result of the power of socialist consciousness.

We have just referred to the peoples of the Soviet Union and this brings us to a point which must be fully grasped if one is to understand the development of Soviet literature and the arts.

Soviet literature is the literature of many peoples, a fact which makes it unique in human cultural development. It is not to be confused with regional literatures that are related by, say, genetic kinship, linguistic similarity, etc. Such interrelated literatures existed before the socialist epoch, such as Scandinavian literatures, the literatures of the East and South Slavic peoples, Arabian literatures, etc. In the Soviet Union a *single* literature, not simply an interrelated group, but a single literary "organism", has been formed of literatures which are genetically unrelated, belonging to different language groups and with widely differing aesthetic traditions. At the same time these literatures have not lost, but rather transformed and developed their specific national features.

This too is undoubtedly the result of the influence of socialism on the artistic culture of

vatism" and backwardness of others, a combination of the richness and diversity of cultures possessing a comparatively long literary tradition, with the poverty and uniformity of cultures whose historical development before socialism was less favourable for the development of a many-sided culture. Socialist internationalisation means something quite different: it means *raising* the cultural level of different peoples *as part of a common process* of bringing them all to the same level, as a result of which the acute disproportions inherited from the past disappear.

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It is essential at this point to give a description, albeit brief, of the pre-revolutionary state of the national cultures of the peoples forming the Russian Empire.

The different stages of these peoples' historical development naturally affected their respective cultures. These various cultures may be roughly divided into three types.

The first category consists of the cultures of peoples who had been living in a bourgeois type of society for a comparatively long period, roughly speaking since the second half of the 19th century, although this society still retained a large number of feudal-bureaucratic features from the past. The powerful democratic movement of the masses, aimed against the feudal-bureaucratic system, gave rise to complex political, ideological and literary developments in Russia, the Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia and elsewhere. The social and cultural development of these peoples was marked by a profound and already clearly apparent differentiation of class contradictions and, most important of all, the speed and

Marxists must carefully extract the sound and valuable kernel of the sincere, tributary, militant democracy of the peasant masses from the husk of Narodnik utopias ("Two ('topias", 1912)!"

All this relates directly to the literatures of our first category.

Naturally this applies first and foremost to progressive Russian culture and within that, perhaps, most of all to Russian classical literature, the humanist and aesthetic values of which had a great influence on the literatures of East and West. Of particular importance was Russian realism which reached its height in the works of Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Lev Tolstoi and Chekhov, and also the emerging new art of socialist realism, especially in the work of Maxim Gorky. Other national literatures in this first category also produced some extremely valuable works in the pre-revolutionary period. For example, Ukrainian, Georgian, Armenian, Latvian and Estonian literature possessed some important romantic and realist writers, including a number who were already laying the foundations for their people's socialist literature, such as Rainis in Latvia, and Franko and Lesya Ukrainka in the Ukraine. The mass of ideological and literary trends here is complex and even includes modernist tendencies. The structure of the genre forms is diverse and modern.

The national liberation movement, with which the work of eminent classical writers was closely linked, such as Shevchenko in the Ukraine, Kupala in Byelorussia, Vilde in Estonia, Chavchavadze in Georgia, Tumanyan in Armenia, Mamedkulizade in Azerbaijan, the Tatar writer Tukai and the Jewish writer Sholom Aleichem, left its mark on the ideological content and the aes-

forms of these people's literature. The nation question, and in particular the question of "national culture", assumed increasing importance for the country. The Russification policy of the tsist government and the Russian landlords bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the nation-ideology of the bourgeoisie in the small nations that formed part of the Empire, on the other, were the two protagonists against which progressive, democratic and socialist elements in national cultures were struggling in concert with progressive Russian culture. In this respect a very important role was played by the theoretical and political work of the Bolshevik Party and its leader Lenin in the organisation, enlightenment and internationalist education of the masses.

To counterbalance the nationalistic tendency to everything Russian, the progressive literature of the oppressed peoples of Russia revealed the social injustices suffered by their respective peoples and supported mastering the progressive culture of the Russian people, and uniting with them in democracy in a common struggle against political and social inequality. The Polish revolutionaries and the Russian Decembrists had once uttered the same rallying cry: "For our and your freedom!" This later became the keynote of relations between the various progressive national cultures in the former Russian Empire.

The same can also be said of the literatures in the second category, the national cultures of peoples where capitalism had only just begun to develop by the time of the October Revolution, where pre-capitalist relations predominated, as the colonised peoples of Central Asia and the peoples along the Volga and in the Caucasus. Here, however, one has to take into account

the special historical circumstances of these peoples, their colonial or semi-colonial position, their lack of contact with modern civilization, the mediaeval structure of their society and everyday life, the persistent striving of the colonialists, the local feudal lords and the Islamic and other religious authorities to preserve this all-pervading "Asianic spirit", to use the concept in its Leninist sense, not as a geographical term, but as a term embracing the social and ideological features of the historical development of undeveloped (in respect to the struggle for democracy) countries, a term which actually expresses this lack of development. All these factors left their mark on the respective cultures and the pre-revolutionary spiritual life of the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Chuvash, etc. It should be noted that several national literatures were in a state of transition at this time, enabling one to associate them with the first category in certain respects and with the second in others. This applies, in the author's view, to Azerbaijani and Tatar literature, for example.

At the beginning of the 20th century, particularly under the influence of the events of 1905, all these peoples experienced a sharp rise in national and social consciousness and the national liberation movement. Lenin made a careful study of the process by which the peoples of the East were being drawn into the world revolutionary movement. He discovered the existence of the same social tendencies in the awakening East as in Russia: conservative backward-looking (feudal), liberal-bourgeois, and "Narodnik"-democratic, although the differentiation of political and ideological tendencies was not as distinct here as it was, for example, in Russian culture. "The

basically feudal, but which was complicated by the beginning of the bourgeois movement on the ideological level, and by elements peculiar to the "Oriental" type of feudalism that differed in many important respects from the "classical", "Western" form, produced something new in the history of mankind. This something was socialist art. It did not emerge from the artistic experience acquired in a capitalist society, or at least was not connected with this experience in a national-genetic sense. It was shown that a socialist culture could be built with the ideological and aesthetic prerequisites which the peoples in question already possessed.

The main positive tradition in the pre-revolutionary culture of these peoples was that of democratic national enlightenment. The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence in the "Russian" Orient of a whole pleiad of writers, essayists, public figures and scholars who devoted themselves to the task of enlightening their peoples, acquainting them with the achievements of modern civilisation and revealing to them the evils of conservatism, religious fanaticism and harmful customs, etc. In this connection one might mention such figures as the Kazakh Abai Kunanbayev, the Uzbek Furkat, the Tajik Ahmad Donish, the Chuvash K. Ivanov and the Ossetian Kosta Khetagurov. The enlightenment movement was not homogeneous. Within it there gradually developed bourgeois-nationalistic tendencies, such as the Jaddidi movement in Central Asia, and national-revolutionary tendencies, many of the representatives of which succeeded in acquiring a socialist world outlook and played an eminent role in the new Soviet culture after 1917. For example, the names of the Uzbek writer Khamza

Khakim-zade Niyazi and the Tajik writer Sad-riddin Aini are among the most revered in multi-national Soviet literature.

On the aesthetic level, those who took an active part in developing the national cultures of the second category were faced with the task of creating a modern, realist literature, continuing on a different basis and in different conditions than which had been started by the great enlighteners. In spite of the value of drawing on their heritage, the great poets of the Oriental Renaissance from the 12th to the 14th centuries were naturally no substitute for a modern, realist literature, and the conservative court and feudal traditions which had survived since those times presented a severe obstacle to the development of realism in this region earlier. Those who helped to develop the national cultures of the second category were faced with the task of literally creating the novel and drama, the professional theatre, painting, music, etc.

The same impressive task faced the third category of national cultures, the cultures of peoples who had not yet emerged from the patriarchal-tribal stage by October 1917, or at best had reached a patriarchal-feudal level, such as the Kirghiz, Bashkirs and the small nationalities in Siberia, Northern Russia, the Far East and parts of the Northern Caucasus region. The national cultures of this group are characterised by the absence of a written language. Certain of these nationalities and tribes were on the brink of extinction as a result of extreme backwardness, cruel colonial oppression and, in some cases, very harsh natural conditions.

The main source and only channel along which the culture of these peoples developed before

socialism was folklore (which also had a strong influence on certain cultures possessing a written tradition). Folklore produced some great works of art (such as the Kirghiz *Manas*, for example, which ranks among the world's greatest heroic epics), but naturally it could not replace a written culture. The clash and intertwining of the "two cultures" can also be traced in the folklore heritage, although of course not as clearly as in literature itself. Motifs and images reflecting the ideals and moods of the working people, similar in spirit to "primitive democracy" stood in contrast to others embodying the views and psychology of the patriarchal ruling circles.

It was essential that the literary values of the democratic folklore heritage should be combined with the cultural experience of other, more historically developed peoples, first and foremost the Russian people, if the nationalities and tribes without a written language (in Soviet times they became known as the "newly-literate") were to take part in building socialist culture and have a new culture, their own literature and their own professional arts. One is fully justified in saying that socialism and socialism *alone* could and did provide the cultures of the peoples in this third category with a genuine national education, including literature.

The following words spoken by Lenin in a conversation with Clara Zetkin apply to all the peoples who took part in the Revolution: "The Red October . . . opened wide the road to a cultural revolution on the grandest scale, which is being brought about on the basis of the incipient economic revolution and in constant interaction with it. Imagine millions of men and women of various nationalities and races and of various degrees of

culture all striving on towards a new life. A superb task confronts the Soviet Government. In a few years or decades it must redress the cultural wrong of many centuries.... A rise in the general cultural standards of the masses will provide the sound and solid basis needed for the training of the powerful and inexhaustible forces that will develop Soviet art, science and technology.... We already have the most important requisites for the cultural revolution since the conquest of power by the proletariat, namely: the awakening of the masses, their aspiration to culture. New people are growing up, produced by the new social order and creating this order."²⁶

3

These words of Lenin's express the need for the dialectic of the formation of that "human material" which is recognised in the arts as one of the basic humanist problems. This problem centres round man and history, the individual and his environment. By the approach to this problem one can determine the "type of epoch". Naturally one must beware of oversimplification here. The "Renaissance man", "the bourgeois man" and "the socialist man" are all valid concepts, provided that they are understood to mean a specific spiritual structure and not a mere list of moral and psychological qualities. By putting on show this or that trait of a character, we immediately schematise and narrow the microcosm of his soul. Moreover, naming a moral or psychological trait is certainly not enough to reveal its true content. In saying that selflessness is a characteristic quality of the socialist man, we are making an empty, abstract statement; selflessness was also to be found in the mediaeval ascetic

who lived according to the principle of loving his neighbour as himself and was prepared to give all he had to others. In the same way, if we state that a character is full of the joy of living, we are not giving a sufficiently penetrating analysis of him: *Don Juan* and *Jérôme Coignard* in *La Rôtisserie de la reine Pédaugue* were all full of the joy of living in their own way.

Universal human characteristics and moral qualities exist in definite socio-historical conditions and, consequently, in a concrete socio-historic form. And if it is an oversimplification to assume that each epoch changes the psychological structure of the human soul in such a way that the old one is completely eradicated by the new, it is an even worse oversimplification, an even greater divergence from the truth, to ignore or refuse to acknowledge the fundamental differences in the content of these concrete, historical structures.

However, a wrong approach to the problem, the habit of considering the problem of humanism outside the historical actions of historically concrete people, does not alter the fact that in the final analysis, looked at on a large scale, literature was concerned first and foremost with the problem of revealing the "type of epoch". Obviously we do not mean by this any single literary character, even though he may be highly representative. Life has always been far too diverse to be contained within the framework of a single character. Neither *Hamlet* nor *Faust* could embrace the whole of their age. Nevertheless every great literary character, whether he is treated epically or lyrically, realistically or symbolically, contains aspects, features, elements, which we are justified in relating to the concept of the "type of epoch" in its full essence. Unlike sociology and philos-

'They would only remain 'as of old' if ... they 'sought the blame in themselves': but they know too well that only under changed circumstances will they cease to be 'as of old', and therefore they are determined to change these circumstances at the first opportunity. *In revolutionary activity the changing of oneself coincides with the changing of circumstances.*'²⁸

The fundamental difference between the proletarian, socialist revolution and all earlier revolutions is to be found, *inter alia*, in the fact that in the process of struggle it creates a new man hostile to the "estates" of feudal society and the "alienation" of bourgeois society. The man of the new, socialist world is first and foremost a transformer of his surroundings, an *active humanist*.

The literature engendered by the Revolution has demonstrated, through the collective efforts of the most varied writers, the "type of epoch" which is marked by a radical break with old relations and the great work of building a new, genuinely humanist world. Naturally the literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries prepared the way for the solution of this problem. Today we discard as sheer naiveté the view of vulgar sociologists that there were no positive characters in pre-revolutionary literature. Such views unjustly belittled the history as well as the art of the preceding era. However, only the *victorious* struggle of the people for its social liberation has given *practically indisputable* proof that it is possible to transform circumstances. And consequently only that literature which strives freely and consciously to "merge with the movement of the really advanced and thoroughly revolutionary class" (V. I. Lenin), only that literature which takes part in this class's struggle for a victory

which has meaning for the whole people and the whole of mankind, is capable of enriching world literature with the character of the new man: the fighter and builder, the socialist man.

With this in mind let us now leaf through the pages of multi-national Soviet literature and examine, albeit in a highly concentrated form, the process of its formation.

The gigantic shaking of foundations which had once been thought immovable, the colossal thrust which toppled the seemingly eternal structure of the old life, these were the themes which the new Soviet art tackled first and foremost. It celebrated the people's victory and triumphantly exalted "the enthusiasm, drive and heroism, which still remain and which will remain for ever as a monument to what a revolution can do and has done".¹² A very distinctive feature of the literature that immediately followed the Revolution was that it concentrated, particularly in lyrical poetry, the victorious upsurge of energy in the people who were winning their own freedom.

At first it was images of the storm, wind and fire in the flames of which the old world would perish that had the strongest impact on the reader. There is, of course, nothing fortuitous in the fact that so many poets used similar symbols.

*Breaking the ring of the blockade,
Throwing the pieces aloft,
Rush forward as a bright-red horseman
Beyond the border, beyond the barrier.*

*Through complaint, wailing
and grumbling
Like a trumpet call rises
Your victorious clatter of hoofs,
Your flight over the extended world.*

*With your heavy hoofs you crush
The crumbling walls of the centuries,
And the merciless sound of the horseshoes
Is terrible on the splitting slabs. . . .*

(“To the Russian Revolution” by Valery Bryusov)

*Red horses are flying swiftly.
The red horses have foaming-crimson
manes,
Their shoes flame and shine
And from their shoes pour forth red
sparks.*

*Fires have soared up like a red flame over
the land.
These red horses have set fire to the
whole land.
Like a storm, they rush without
restraint—
The ecstasy of revolt and the alarm of
the chase.*

*Ever louder, clearer the clatter of hoofs.
The sparks have pierced the future like
arrows,
And the foundations of palaces collapse
in the storm,
The fire rages, embracing all extremities.*

(“Red Horses” by Yegishe Charents)

And from the Ukraine the voice of Pavlo Tychina joins in this choir with his famous *Plough* in which we also find the image of the “fiery horse” and the mighty wind.

Wind.

*Not wind—a storm:
Crushes, breaks, tears out of the earth. . . .*

The heart of that time was man embodying and concentrating in himself the energy of the masses. This was not a schematic abstraction. It was reality reflected in the romantic forms of artistic enthusiasm. "We shall dare and succeed in breaking the old world and erecting a new one," proclaims one of these heroes. "You will not dare!" cry back his most deadly ardent enemies. "They will not succeed," whisper his secret contenders and the indifferent in an attempt to console themselves. The "third force", the intellectual "neutrals", the lovers and connoisseurs of "the beautiful" solemnly declare that art is outside class and that Party commitment and political "preconceptions" are alien to art. The new art fought these hostile or insidious ideas with articles, tracts and speeches, and even more successfully with literary experiment on a scale hitherto unknown in all genres, experiment carried on by the multitude of writers who answered the call of the Revolution to rally under its banner.

Let us now consider exactly who made up this first generation of Soviet writers.

Naturally we find first and foremost among its ranks those writers who were in some way or other connected with the proletarian revolutionary struggle and the Bolsheviks well before the Revolution, during the period of its preparation and when it actually took place. The definite influence of socialist ideas on the work of such writers as M. Gorky, V. Mayakovsky, A. Serafimovich, D. Bedny, A. Upits and A. Akopyan is indisputable. Mayakovsky's famous words—"To accept or not to accept. For me such a question . . . did not arise. My revolution"²³—speak for themselves.

Most of the writers of democratic, including

Thus bearing his individual experience of life and his own personality.

Actually, the thing the most national Soviet literature of the twenties did not yet constitute a single aesthetic whole. This is not only because the links between the literatures of the various peoples and the writers of the different republics were still few and unsystematic. The work of developing them was actually begun in the mid-twenties. The main factor, however, was the difference in levels of historical and cultural development, which meant that the most urgent tasks facing the respective national literatures also varied greatly. In spite of this, we had good reason to begin this account by quoting from the works of poets of different nationalities. One must on no account underestimate the existence of common ideas and common creative motifs in the national literatures, even in the twenties. Although it was not yet a single artistic "organism", Soviet literature of the twenties was far from being a conglomeration of totally dissimilar literatures.

To return to our discussion of the humanist content of life in the years immediately following the Revolution and the artistic forms in which it was expressed, we must emphasise that a common feature of Soviet literature at that time was its *revolutionary-romantic* pathos.

The collapse of the old world and the people's victory and struggle were seen and expressed by literature in deliberately bold, generalised and symbolic images. The fabric of reality and the actual tenor of the times was, as it were, integrated in romantic writing. These artistic principles found their fullest embodiment in poetry, where the genres of the march, the

In Blok's poem *The Twelve* the measured "revolutionary pace" of the twelve Red Guardsmen conquers the wild elements expressed in the free rhythms of the *chastushka*, or popular rhymed quatrain. The fierce onslaught of the "Red wolves" in Nikolai Tikhonov's famous ballad *Perekop* and the fury in his collections of poems entitled *The Horde* and *Brew* are intertwined with a positive motive already announced in the epigraph from Baratynsky: "When the blossoming world arose from the equilibrium of wild forces...." Mayakovsky in his *Left March*, which resounded throughout the country, urged people forward through "mountains of pain" to the as yet unknown, but attainable "virgin sunny land".

We are presented, so to speak, with the components of the new faith of the vast mass of the people inspired by the aim of building a new world in which to quote from the *Internationale*, the song of the revolutionary working class, "he who was nothing will become everything". Naturally this faith has not yet become a plan of work, but neither was it a commonplace illusion, a mere "good intention", for it possessed a real socio-historical basis. Faith in the possibility of building a noble future, belief in oneself, in one's powers and potential, consciousness of oneself as a person with the ability and obligation to build a new life for one's children and the whole of mankind—these are the dominant humanist traits of the most typical characters found in Soviet literature during this period.

The spiritual make-up of the new man
a great deal that was immature and,
much that was infected by the
of Leftism. Writers who became

victims of this disease occasionally had a completely false picture of the new man. By exalting the Revolution in "cosmic" imagery, certain Proletkult²³ and Futurist poets lost touch with reality and completely abstracted if not "man in general", then "work in general", "the machine in general", "the revolution in general" and "the mass in general", reducing the importance of the human personality by diluting it in a kind of amorphous anonymity which consisted of a multitude of identical atoms.

The task of overcoming this type of literary attitude, which gave expression to the petty-bourgeois tendencies in the social consciousness and had nothing in common with socialist humanism, was soon among those given top priority.

In literature it was successfully solved in the romantic trend, both in prose, as has already been mentioned using the example of *The Iron Flood*, and in poetry where the inspiring example was provided by the original works of Mayakovskiy and other extremely authoritative and highly popular poets, including the young Komsomol bards who urged their muse to "come down to earth". This process was not limited entirely to romantic writing, which had ceased to be the all-pervading style in Soviet literature by the beginning of the twenties. Poetry too began to show the concrete side of reality, mainly political events and aspects of everyday life, in narrative verse (particularly in the heroic ballad which became extremely popular), satirical verse and so on. Poetry gained increasing confidence in expressing the thoughts, feelings and characters of the people of the times who were not sustained only by their faith and the

finds in the best novels, plays and poetry of the twenties did not overemphasize the real contradictions of the time. Suffice it to mention the novels of K. Fein, I. Leonov, Y. Oleinik, P. Panch and M. Javakhishvili, and the lyrical poetry of S. Yesenin, E. Bagritsky, N. Aseyev, P. Tychina, M. Bashan, T. Tabidze and G. Leonidze. Not all the writers who dealt with the contradictions of the NEP period succeeded in portraying the vistas of social development sufficiently convincingly. There were also those who lost heart when faced by the complexity of the period, primarily those who tended to see life from a romantic point of view. But the best works, imbued with a real dramatic quality, succeeded in affirming the new without oversimplifying what they were portraying, and their authors became, as Mayakovsky put it, "the architects of new relations and new loves".

A realistic analysis of reality presupposes an understanding of history on the part of the writer. By the late twenties Soviet literature and the aesthetic consciousness of society as a whole revealed the increasing conviction that the link between historical periods does not eliminate or reduce the qualitatively new features (social, ideological, moral, etc.) of the present in relation to preceding periods. On the contrary, these new features are most convincing when history is understood as a *continuous process*, as the transition or dialectic movement from yesterday to today. It is therefore quite logical that this period saw the emergence of the historical novel in Soviet literature, a highly important achievement in this field of literature. The Soviet historical novel does not depict the eternal round of human suffering, the constant repetition of spiritual tor-

these lines were M. Sholokhov with his epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* and A. Tolstoi with *The Ordeal*. Interesting works in the same genre appeared in Georgia (N. Lordkipanidze's *From the Paths Onto the Rails*), Uzbekistan (A. Kadyri's *Scorpion from the Altar*), Byelorussia (works by Y. Kolas, T. Gartny, and others), and Kazakhstan (S. Seifulin's *Hard Road, Difficult Passage*). The best meditative poetry (such as that of S. Yesenin, B. Pasternak, P. Tychina, M. Bazhan, G. Tabidze, T. Tabidze, G. Gulyam and K. Alimjan) contains reflections on the age and the individual, and on the various links and clashes between different periods.

Thus three features typical of Soviet literature began to emerge as early as the twenties: socialist humanism confirming the activity of man, the transformer of historical conditions who is himself transformed spiritually in the process; social determinism in respect of human behaviour and world outlook (not determinism in its vulgar meaning), and a creative understanding of history. The fact that Soviet literature was still young could be seen from its romantic outlook on the world, its lofty optimism, and also certain infantile diseases and the categorical nature of certain theoretically "Left" pronouncements. Nevertheless it was already demonstrating its ideological strength in a rich variety of styles (from the romantic and expressive to the strict forms of realist psychological analysis). But the main thing was that *realism* was becoming consolidated in young Soviet literature as a method of perceiving, understanding and portraying reality, the new realism inspired by the humane ideal of socialism.

The development and recognition of this

method of portraying man belongs to the period which one might call "Soviet literature of the first five-year plans".

4

The main concern of Soviet writers has always been to confirm "existence as action, creation, the aim of which is the continuous development of man's most valuable, individual abilities", the man who has been socially liberated and realised the possibility of changing the world into "a splendid dwelling place for mankind united into one family".²⁶ But it was in the period of the first five-year plans, the late twenties and the whole of the thirties, that this new humanism came to the fore in Soviet literature as a conscious theme.

During those years, years which witnessed a new, powerful upsurge of the people's creative energies, the building of socialist industry and the radical reorganisation of the countryside, the ethic and aesthetic outlook of society still contained a great deal which seems naive and incorrect from the modern point of view (such as prescriptions for a "dialectico-materialist method", survivals of the Proletkult, etc.). However literature was becoming broader and more profound, discarding restricting schemes. It was constantly revealing new layers of reality (in the feature-story, the novel and poetry) and showing increasing success in combining the treatment of highly topical problems with an intensive search for artistic synthesis.

Soviet literature played a most active part in building socialism, creating socialist relations between people, inculcating a sense of moral and political unity in the Soviet people (the 1936

Constitution of the USSR gives expression to this unity of society in which all traces of classes exploiting the labour of others had disappeared), and developing internationalist morals and psychology, that sense of "a united family" (an expression first quoted by the Ukrainian poet P. Tychina and now in common usage), which is so characteristic of the multi-national Soviet state.

The development of Soviet literature during the first two five-year plans is marked by a sharp quickening of interest in the socialist achievements of the Soviet people, the vast construction projects, collectivisation of agriculture, the new way of life, etc. This explains the rapid growth of the feature-story.³⁷ A concrete documental style emerged in the novel, story, play and even lyrical poetry. The Magnitogorsk, Kuznetsk, Dnieper hydro-electric station, Vakhsh project, Turkestan-Siberia Railway construction project, the electrification and irrigation in Transcaucasia, etc., became the writers' laboratory or school of life. This school wrought important changes in the work of writers who were already well known, such as Ilya Ehrenburg, M. Rylsky and G. Javid. The wave upon wave of new writers who were coming to swell the ranks of Soviet literature³⁸ were inspired by the heroic creative enthusiasm of the early five-year plans. The social and human problems relating to life on the new construction projects and the social reorganisation of the countryside were treated by writers in works of an epic kind, many of which have since become classics. One might mention, for example, such Russian novels as M. Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* (Part I of which was published in 1932), I. Leonov's *The River*

most important of all, tomorrow."⁶¹ The similarity between these views and Gorky's theory of the "three realities"⁶² is very obvious. Gorky urged writers to pay attention to the hard facts of life, but not to be empiricists. He bade them understand the inner humanist dialectic of work—"socialist work as the organiser of the new man and the new man as the organiser of socialist work". In his article entitled "Two Five-Year Plans" (1935) Gorky emphasised that "nowhere else has this two-sided process ever been developed as widely as here. This process conceals a vast number of different types of themes of tremendous social interest for the masters of the written word. In order to find and develop these themes with the requisite clarity it is necessary, in my opinion, to take into account three realities: the past which provides the premises, the present which fights against the past, and the future which is already discernible in broad outline."⁶³

It has already been stated above that the literary works of the thirties included many which centred on the moral, humanist theme. The period of the Civil War is now regarded more from this point of view, and not from the earlier standpoint in which the main emphasis in most books was on direct portrayal of the class struggle and political events. N. Ostrovsky's famous novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* is a fine example of this new form of treatment, as are the prose works of A. Fadeyev, V. Katayev, L. Sobolev, Y. Smolich, A. Golovko, K. Chornyi, Mir Jalal, A. Kutateli, S. Mukanov, and S. Aini, to mention but a few, and the poetry of N. Aseyev, I. Jansugurov, A. Lakhuti and many others. The moral humanist theme is even more to the forefront in L. Leonov's *Skutarevsky* and *The Way to the*

ing this, the author does not draw special attention to his hero's deficiency as an educator of other people. However, in his novel *Energy* Gladkov clearly acknowledges the inability of his hero Miron Vatagin to educate people. Miron is forced to hear some very just and bitter criticism of himself. Pasha tells him: "You are only sensitive in seeing people off, not meeting them." Olga says: "You must love people in order to understand them . . . you look up and beyond people to get a long view. But you are blind and indifferent to your nearest and dearest." Baikalov criticises him as follows: "The trouble with you is that your communist feelings are poorly developed."

The emphasis is moved from "changing the environment" to "changing oneself" but the latter is seen against real life. Fadeyev's Levinson is, perhaps, a particularly vivid embodiment of this type of humanist trend. Together with Furmanov's Commissar Klychkov, he was the first of a whole line of characters who aimed at educating others, a line which was to include such varied figures as Basov from Y. Krymov's *The Tanker Derbent* and Kurilov from L. Leonov's *The Way to the Ocean*. In post-war literature this line was continued by Voropayev in P. Pavlenko's *Happiness*, Bryansky in O. Gonchar's *The Standard-Bearers*, Ustimenko in Y. German's *The Staunch and the True* and Ragozin in K. Fedin's trilogy. Ragozin's words to his young friend Kirill are basically an expression of Levinson's guiding principles: "So I simply ask myself: do we want to change human relations in the future? . . . Then it seems to me we ought to search for signs of this change in our present life, so that a bit of the future may come to life in the present, under-

over from envy, greed, malice and stupidity, from all the deformities which have crippled the working people over the centuries."

And this is also the moral creed of Soviet literature.

It is interesting to trace the universal nature of this basic humanist standpoint by comparing works of various, quite different writers. Take the following example.

Let us return to Fadeyev's *The Rout*, written in 1926 but ahead of its time in many respects, and compare it with the novel *Horsemen* (1913) by the Ukrainian writer V. Yanovsky. The difference in style is immediately apparent, as can be seen from the following extracts containing descriptions of nature (and more besides).

Yanovsky: "... All round the forest stood evenly, supporting the sky, and swaying and creaking like a ship's rigging. The detachment advanced through this brooding solemnity. A tragic spectacle was being enacted in the sky. Glaciers were sliding down mountains and covering whole continents, icebergs were floating in the seas, while continents split apart in the sky and drifted into the oceans. . . . Chubenko sat silently in the saddle, the blood pounding in his chest and a pale mist before his eyes. He brushed it aside with the palm of his hand. Silence fell, for everyone realised that Chubenko was about to speak. And Chubenko always said something worth listening to. Stubborn and vociferous, he was now about to tell them about the Donbass, their goal, the Revolution. He would look each of them straight in the eye and each would feel that he was gazing into his own eyes."

Fadeyev: "... The sun had already risen above the forest; the hoar-frost had melted long since;

poetry and the paths leading to the flowering of
‘The few structures of feelings’.

Gazgan continues: ‘See, technology brings us
closer to this—hundreds of miles closer, not a
few inches. And this is why a breakdown on the
conveyor belt of a tractor factory is of much more
concern to us than all the women in the world,
although we are quite partial to women as well.’¹
This is, of course, somewhat exaggerated to make
the point, but basically the reasoning is sound.
The fact that women are essential to men’s happiness
goes without saying. But the concept of the
conveyor belt as an integral part of happiness
is something quite new. Man’s world has ex-
panded, but nothing that is good and necessary
to him is disappearing. This is the main conclu-
sion of the hero that emerged in Soviet literature
of the thirties.

Gazgan’s words are directed, in the first in-
stance, against such sceptics as Safonov and Ka-
valerov from Y. Olesha’s *Envoy*, and, in the second
instance, against the narrow, active, but uncreat-
ive people such as Babichev, another character in
Envoy.

Literary characters, like their authors, are con-
stantly arguing among themselves, sometimes
openly, sometimes not. But there are arguments
between points of view that are mutually exclu-
sive, and arguments that are resolved by the
course of history which shows itself to be wiser
than even the most brilliant writer.

Y. Iljin’s affirmation of Gazgan and the moral
defeat which Y. Olesha inflicts on those of his
characters who are diametrically opposed to
Gazgan, illustrate the striking similarity of the
positions adopted by these two so different
writers. “I thought all feelings had perished—

love, devotion and tenderness. But they are still all here, Valya." Ivan Babichev's cry to his daughter is most reminiscent of Gargan's words about "the new structure of feelings". And in Olesha's short story "Human Material", written in the same year as *Envj.*, we find another motif already sounded by Gargan: "I want to destroy all the petty feelings in myself. Even if I cannot be an engineer of the elements, I am still capable of being an engineer of human material. Does that sound pompous? What matter! I proclaim loudly: Long live the reconstruction of human material, the all-embracing engineering of the new world!"

5

An integral part of this "engineering of the new world" was the development of the creative consciousness of writers and, consequently, the re-organisation of literary life.

There was no ideological or aesthetic unity in literature in the twenties, a time when Soviet society itself was not yet socially united. The famous resolution on the Party policy in the sphere of literature of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of June 18, 1925 read: "Just as the class struggle is not ceasing in general here, so it is still continuing on the literary front. In a class society there is not and cannot be neutral art, although the class nature of art, and literature in particular, expresses itself in forms that are infinitely more varied than is the case with the class nature of politics, for example."⁴⁵ Bourgeois anti-Soviet and "restoration" trends could naturally not thrive under the dictatorship of the proletariat and by

opposing it died out. It turned out to be more difficult to overcome the ideological influence of the petty-bourgeois consciousness which, as Lenin warned on many occasions, is characterised by the fluctuating, indeterminate and varied nature of its forms of manifestation in various types of extremes, ranging from the anarchist and individualist type of ultra-revolutionary trends and the concept of abstract, absolute freedom to total pessimism, disillusionment and theories of the biological inertia of man, etc. In the sphere of aesthetics the petty-bourgeois ideology and psychology appeared in a great variety of types of aesthetic radicalism, such as the Proletkult nihilistic attitude to the classical heritage, the theory of art for art's sake, the absolute importance attached to the artist's *subconscious*, the "technologisation" of art turning it into a bare, formal construction which was supposed to crystallise the "industrial spirit of the age", and the shoddy sociological type of schematisation, etc. Trotskyism, the quintessence of petty-bourgeois ideology, constituted a considerable threat to Soviet society and consequently Soviet literature as well. In the literary sphere Trotskyite theories attempted to prove that it was impossible to create a socialist culture in the Land of Soviets. In this respect Trotskyism was continuing the old line of revisionists who belittled the importance of the Revolution. Trotsky tried to prove that the age was inimical to such lyrical poets as Yesenin, maintaining that the building of socialism had ruined his poetry. This was false both with respect to socialism, which is by no means antipathetic to lyrical poetry, and with respect to Yesenin who was eager to grasp the new historical truth.

narrow platforms. It is possible to examine, as various specialists have, the links between Mayakovskiy and the Futurists or the journal *LEF*,⁴⁶ but it is quite clear that Mayakovskiy should not be reduced to nothing but a Futurist writer. The same applies to Aseyev and *LEF*, Akhmatova and the Acmeists,⁴⁷ Rylsky and the Ukrainian Neo-classicists, T. Tabidze, P. Yashvili and the Georgian group known as the Blue Horns,⁴⁸ and so on.

As far as the actual platforms of these various groups are concerned, it is essential to see their underlying ideological and aesthetic concepts. For example, there were the apolitical trends and the trend towards art for art's sake (in the platforms of the Serapion Brothers, the Neo-classicists and *VAPLITE*⁴⁹ in the Ukraine, the Georgian Academists, and, in a very distinctive form, the Central Asian nationalist group *Chagatai Gurungi*, etc.); the tendency towards aesthetic Left-wing radicalism (which appears in a different form in the platforms of each Proletkult group, *LEF*, the Futurist and pro-Futurist groups in the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and the Tatar Republic); and "in between" were the organisations of "proletarian", "peasant" and "young" writers, such as the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and similar organisations in the other republics, the organisations of peasant writers in Russia and the Ukraine, the *Uzvyshsha* and *Molodnyak* groups in Byelorussia, the Union of Armenian Working Writers, and so on.

The subjective honesty of most of the writers who were members of these groups and their conviction that they were following the only true path to create a new literature for the new society does not alter the objective ideological and

life of the country ended when the Soviet people embarked on the actual task of building socialism, having attained the necessary social and political unity required for this task.

It is both absurd and dishonest to speak of a Party dictate, if only for the reason that the resolution of April 23, 1932 abolished the association of proletarian writers, other groups having already died out. Furthermore, the resolution set the task of "uniting all writers who support the platform of Soviet power and are eager to take part in the building of socialism, into a single union of Soviet writers..."⁵⁰

Unless one is influenced by the political views of the opponents of socialism, it is impossible not to see the general line of Party policy in the field of the arts, which was expressed in the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party's letter of December 1920 on the Proletkult organisations, its resolution of 1925 and its decision of 1932. The second of these Party documents emphasised the right to "free competition of the various groupings and trends" in "the sphere of artistic form" for the simple reason that the existence of the groupings was inevitable in those particular circumstances, and also because such competition is natural in the arts. Nevertheless this concept is totally removed from that of the "peaceful coexistence" of conflicting ideologies. The Party emphasised that it "guides literature as a whole" and not any "faction of literature... classifying these factions according to differing views on form and style..."; that the task of Party criticism was "to reveal the social and class content of literary trends" ... "without for a minute abandoning communist positions, or retreating a single iota

revolution taking place throughout the country in each of the republics, the old intelligentsia was re-educated and a new intelligentsia was created which played its part, *inter alia*, in culture and the arts. Closing the Congress, Gorky stated that the cultures of the various republics which are "national in form will remain and must be socialist in essence".⁵⁴

This formula, which expressed the objective dialectic of the national and international elements in culture and the arts, gradually developed as a generalisation of the progress of Soviet culture during the twenties and thirties, as the embodiment and continuation of the Leninist programme for solving the national question.

The First Congress of Soviet Writers acted as a great stimulus to the subsequent rapid development of literary contact between the various republics, which included translation of each other's literature, personal visits by writers, etc. This increasingly profound study of the history and literature of the various republics not only helped to promote an internationalist, all-Union feeling and consciousness in the writers themselves, but also had a most stimulating effect on their work. For many the writing of works based on material provided by other Soviet Republics had an important effect on their subsequent literary development. Many of these works rank among the best of Soviet literature as a whole, for example, the poetry about Georgia and translations of Georgian poetry by N. Tikhonov, D. Pasternak and M. Bazhan, *Kolchis* by K. Paustovsky, the collection of poems entitled *To Bolsheviks of the Desert and Spring* by V. Lugovskoi, the Ukrainian writer I. Ic's

nor on the actual theory of socialist realism itself.⁵⁵ One or two aspects of this subject, however, call for attention here.

First of all, we should like to distinguish between those who have a genuinely mistaken view about socialist realism and those who attack it for political reasons, using the cover of aesthetics to open fire on socialist ideology as a whole. It was the latter who first produced the theory, that was later to be taken up and preached by revisionist elements as well, that socialist realism was imposed on Soviet literature from without by a Party "decree", that it restricts individual creativity, reduces all writers to the same level, and so on and so forth. We in the Soviet Union find it difficult to understand how people can ignore the striking differences between such writers as, say, Mayakovsky and Tvardovsky, or Sholokhov and Leonov. Both in the Soviet Union and abroad socialist realism has produced such outstanding works and demonstrated so convincingly and repeatedly the fruitfulness of its main ideological and aesthetic principles, i.e., communist ideals and commitment to the people, which allow very broad scope for the ideas and imagination of the writers who share them, that it is fully justified in replying to the attacks of its political opponents with Dante's scornful words: "Look and pass on." All that needs to be said here is that the Soviet Communist Party has never called for a levelling of literary styles. On the contrary, it has always proclaimed that there should and must be stylistic variety in our arts. The same is true today. The resolution of the recent 24th Party Congress states quite plainly: "The Party stands for a variety and wealth of forms and styles evolved on the basis of socialist



distorts the truth is in itself a blatant distortion of the facts.

The concept of the "creative method" crystallised in Soviet literature and the arts of the twenties and thirties,⁵⁴ in the discussions of that period, and the reflections of writers and artists who cannot possibly be regarded as being similar in style or as non-realists. The concept of the creative method of socialist realism emerged in the course of efforts to do away with schematisation, oversimplification and false "constructions" in the portrayal of reality. It represented a generalisation of the progress that had been made by Soviet literature in understanding the truth about life. It also expressed the various paths to attaining that truth. The article in which the concept of socialist realism was first mentioned emphasised that "a scrupulous study of reality and its faithful reflection in literature and the arts are the best ways of understanding the rectitude and strength of the working class".⁵⁵

It is a well-known fact that Gorky played an important role in formulating the theory of socialist realism. He defined it from the most varied points of view, but always took for granted the fact that it was "realistic, figurative thought based on socialist experience".⁵⁶ Most Soviet writers also take this for granted. Here is just one example of the many that one might quote in this connection. The Byelorussian novelist K. Chorny defined socialist realism as a method of figurative art which obliges the artist "to proceed from historical reality and develop his philosophy on the basis of this reality alone".⁵⁷

This discussion of creative method inevitably leads us to the question of the very essence of



: was the renewal of these systems which
the formation of the method of socialist
ism.

6

So much nonsense is still being talked by people
in the West about the socialist man and the "man
of epoch" revealed in Soviet literature.

They admit that new heroes have emerged
in the revolutionary era, but insist that they
were mere drops in the eternal ocean of universal
alienation and the constant split of the human
ego. At the same time, however, the new heroes
were uniting the most different sorts of people
under the banner of socialism, the banner of
socialist humanism; the ranks of those building
a new life were swelled by more and more new
people who had been re-educated in the common
struggle and brought human richness and variety
into the common movement.

The label of "individual fatalist" was replaced
by that of "bureaucratic optimist". The new hero,
it was said, was a varnisher who never felt grief
and was indifferent to the grief of others.

It is quite true that we are historical optimists.
Our experience of changing reality has strengthened
our conviction that it is possible to attain
universal human happiness. But we are far more
inherently sympathetic than anyone else to the
pain and humiliation of others, far more ready
to grieve for our fallen comrades. The optimist's
tragedy (as *Vsevolod Vishnevsky's* famous play
is called) does not turn into vaudeville. It remains
a tragedy. Only a complete fool or a vindictive
demagogue could fail to perceive the intense pain
in *Mayakovsky's* poem ² "Theodor Neter".



sures are most harmful"⁶⁵ was sometimes ignored. We openly admit that at one time there was a certain tendency in literature towards false optimism which had *nothing whatsoever in common with our real historical optimism based on the authentic portrayal of the contradictions and conflicts of reality*. We are also aware that there was an oversimplified sociological schematisation which restricted the aesthetic and ethic horizons of art.

It was the Party that told the people honestly and frankly that the cult of personality had "inflicted serious harm on the development of socialist democracy". However the strength of the socialist system and its unshakeable foundations, the strength of the Party and Soviet society was demonstrated by the fact that "in spite of the cult of personality, the powerful initiative of the popular masses led by the Communist Party, engendered by our system, carried out its great historical mission, overcoming all obstacles on the path to the building of socialism".⁶⁶

Soviet literature, too, continued to carry out its historical mission.

Its principles were put to the test by the cruellest war in human history.

During these harsh years Soviet literature was more firmly linked to the people and the Party than ever before. Over a thousand Soviet writers (which was more than a third of the membership of the Union of Writers) volunteered for active service, and about three hundred died in battle or in hospital. Soviet writers really proved their worth in the war years.

"Right on the front lines from the Black Sea in the south to the Barents Sea in the Arctic, among the defenders of the hero cities and the

others: the epic poems such as *Kirov Is with Us* by N. Tikhonov, *Zoya* by M. Aliger, *The Son* by P. Antokolsky, *Funeral of a Friend* by P. Tychina, *Prometheus* by A. Malvishko, *The Brigade Banner* by A. Kuleshov and *The Invincible Caucasus* by G. Abashidze; such prose works as M. Sholokhov's "Science of Hatred", B. Gorbatov's "Letter to a Comrade", V. Grossman's *The People Is Immortal*, K. Simonov's *Days and Nights*, L. Sobolev's *Sea Soul*, M. Shaginyan's *The Urals Afire* and V. Vasilevskaya's *Rainbow*; such plays as L. Leonov's *Invasion*, K. Simonov's *Russian People*, A. Korneichuk's *The Front Line*, and *Guard of Honour* by M. Auezov and A. Abishev, the satirical works of such writers as S. Marshak, D. Bedny, S. Mikhalkov, O. Vishnya, Y. Galan and K. Krapiva, and last but not least the vast range of lyrical poetry. The degree of intensity of literary work by Soviet writers during the war will be better understood if we bear in mind that in those difficult years epic works were written which disproved the so-called "theory of distance": according to this theory a certain amount of time had to lapse between historical events and their portrayal in epic form. A. Fadeyev's novel *The Young Guard*, for example, was written very shortly after the events which it describes.

*"The just and sacred battle is raging.
Not for the sake of fame are we
waging
The mortal combat, but for the sake
Of life on earth."*

wrote Tvardovsky in his famous narrative poem *Vasily Tyorkin*, also written during the war.

Umuti's Country. As he awaited execution in the nazi prison he not only displayed great fortitude, but wrote:

*I see anew how rich the world's in light,
And feel the vital breath of happiness.
I marvel and am filled with the joy of life
As though I had entered it for the first time.*

As well as employing her lyrical talent to write about "the fierce threat of war" and "the music of retribution", the great Lithuanian poetess Salomeja Neris also proclaimed:

*Be thou not quiet, my heart, but sing
Of life, the sun, and the sky so bright,
Of the forest with sandy paths now ring
And the wind-driven clouds in flight.
And let your joyful song in flight
Drive away the steppe wind's moan,
Let the sounds of singing columns
Drown the cannon's thunderous groan.*

Here again we are dealing basically with the constant element of socialist humanism in Soviet multi-national literature. The war not only tested and strengthened this basic tradition founded by the Revolution and Gorky, but developed it further. It was carried on by writers whose civic and human qualities had been moulded in the harsh school of war.⁶⁹

The war affirmed the basic principles of socialist humanism, the strictly social approach to

life, our active, militant, practical love of mankind, rather than abstract compassion. Today we still find alien the concept of "controlling"—the counterpart of the subversive idea that since people have been suffering throughout the centuries they are doomed to suffer in the future too.

Earlier on it was mentioned that in the period of the early five-year plans socialist realist literature took up the theme of man's full manifestation of his feelings and strivings as an essential aspect of the theme of human happiness, the emphasis being placed by Soviet writers on the fact that the very struggle for happiness gives man the sensation of happiness, enabling him to develop, flourish and experience the full depth and richness of human emotions. Circumstances were such that the necessary conditions were not always present for man to enjoy such a full life, but these restrictions were never turned into a virtue. Life for the people was difficult, but they overcame these difficulties and never idolised them. The people lacked culture, but they strove actively to acquire it, without making a virtue of their backwardness.

It is surely this theme of happiness that imbues as an ideal and as an attribute of the Soviet people's outlook on life the works produced by Soviet writers dealing with the Second World War, the war literature that was compelled to "sing of hatred", but did not forget that people do not live to hate, that they are not born soldiers.

*To rid the world, our planet, from the plague—
That's humanism. And we are humanists*

This is a quotation from Vera Inber's fine war poem *The Pulkovo Meridian*. She too succeeded

brilliantly in conveying the wide range of emotions and activities of the Leningraders during the siege, who were driven on by the single passion to conquer, but did not cease to aspire to other things, to love and to enjoy art. Through the terrifying details of the inhuman suffering which the enemy inflicted on the Soviet people runs a clear, melodic, dramatic theme:

We shall avenge the young and the old.

The hunched old men,

The child's coffin, such a tiny one,

No bigger than a violin case.

It came to the end of its road on a sledge

Through firing and dark, falling snow.

*Yes, we are humanists! We treasure the light
Of noble thought (extolled by us).*

For us the shining of a good deed

Is like the gleam of signet ring or goblet

Handed down from father to son,

*From generation to generation, onwards, without
end.*

7

The aim of this article is not to give an equally detailed account of all the periods of Soviet literature. It is rather to show that the humanist element in our literature is one of the most important factors determining its birth and formation, and one of its basic, constantly developing features. This development continued both during the war and in the post-war years, that very complex, difficult period when, within a remarkably short space of time the Soviet Union had to recover from the devastation wreaked by the war, rebuild the economy and counteract the cold war which the imperialist powers launched against the Soviet Union.

How did Soviet literature measure up to these tasks? The widespread view in the West is that this period was one of decline, the absence of any real conflict in literature. A single aspect is inflated out of all proportion and presented as the whole picture, whereas in fact the late forties witnessed a number of interesting developments. They saw the final establishment of many new national literatures, in particular those of the peoples of Siberia, the Northern Caucasus and the Soviet Far East. It was during this period that the question of a variety of styles in the art of socialist realism became very widely discussed, and Soviet literature as a whole was enriched by many new styles. It also produced some fine works in a variety of different genres, particularly the epic genre. The end of the forties and early fifties also saw the further development of the humanist consciousness of society which was overcoming the tendency to avoid conflict in literature and make literature serve strictly utilitarian ends. The influence of negative aspects of the age can be detected in such works as P. Pavlenko's *Happiness* and V. Azhayev's *Far from Moscow*, but it did not interfere with the essence of these works and many others dealing with contemporary life. It is much more correct to see them as a continuation of the basic humanist tradition of Soviet literature, a tradition which has reached great heights in the last ten to fifteen years.

It may be objected that by emphasising the ethical link between works belonging to different periods in the development of Soviet literature, we ignore the distinctive nature of each of the historical stages in the development of socialist humanism. This is certainly not the case. In order

To understand the specific one must first investigate the common. Criticism which attempts to study modern literature without taking into account what has gone before and without making a careful examination of the thousands of threads that link the literature of today with that of yesterday, is committing a grave error.

On the other hand, of course, it would be wrong to equate today with yesterday. There has been a change in the balance of power in the world arena, a change in favour of the forces of socialism, progress and democracy. Our country, the Soviet Union, has entered a new stage in its socialist history. "The developed socialist society to which Lenin referred in 1918 as to the future of our country has been built by the selfless labour of the Soviet people. This has enabled us to tackle in practice the great task set by the Party Programme, by its latest concessions—that of building the material and technical basis of communism."⁷⁰

This new stage is symbolised not only by the Soviet Union's great achievements in outer space, not only by the country's growing economic strength, political authority and contribution to the scientific and technological revolution, etc., which are obvious to the whole world, not only by the rise in the standard of living of Soviet people (which will increase substantially during the ninth five-year plan), but also by the tremendous advances that have been made in the sphere of social consciousness, and consequently in the sphere of literature and the arts.

The Party has given a very clear analysis of the relationship between the economic, ideological, political, cultural and moral aspects of the progress of Soviet society in the Central Com-

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"The transition from socialism to communism is a natural historical process. As socialist society develops and becomes stronger, it grows into communist society. Our advance can bring us only to communism. Any attempt artificially to slow down or precipitate this advance inevitably clash with the law-governed process of social development. As we build factories and plants, consolidate collective and state farms, improve social relations and multiply our spiritual wealth we create a highly organised society of conscious and free working men and women devoted to communist ideals. Communism is an embodiment of real humanism. 'Everything for the sake of man, everything for the benefit of man', is a principle written into the Party Programme."⁷¹

The increased preoccupation of Soviet literature with moral questions is most significant. Soviet humanism is not becoming abstract, asocial anthropologism. The critical discussions that centre around works revealing a tendency in this direction are a typical feature of modern literary life. On the contrary, Soviet humanism is becoming increasingly alert and vigilant in its concern for people. This is not the "humanisation" of socialism which is preached by liberal-bourgeois and revisionist ideologists living in societies where socialism is constantly being attacked in all sorts of subtle ways by the old, bourgeois world. On the contrary, we believe, and the course of modern world politics shows us to be right, that "the humanist is not the person who merely grieves for the wretched victim and is distressed by the fact that murder exists in the world. The humanist is the person

who helps to deflect the murderer's blow and tame his evil intent," as M. Sholokhov said in his address to the Soviet Committee on Relations with Asian and African Writers.⁷² By not turning into a vague, asocial type of humanism blunting the vigilance of the socialist world, our humanism, one might say, now determines the whole atmosphere of society cleansing it of the polluting influence of intolerance and insensitivity.

All this is acknowledged by and reflected in Soviet literature. Take these lines by poet K. Vanshenkin, for example.

*How irritated I sometimes got,
How dislike gave me no peace.
To tell the truth, the same
Still happens to me now and again.*

*But, while keeping the link with the past,
I live much more simply now,
Becoming more patient with others,
More demanding and severe with myself.*

Naturally one should not overgeneralise from one example, but the mood expressed in these lines is very typical of the general attitude of Soviet people today. Only one statement here is perhaps incorrect—"I live much more simply now", but the author is obviously making it with a touch of irony. What he is really talking about here is not simplicity but naturalness, humanism which has become "an integral part and parcel of man, as natural and simple as the inborn need to work", that "great happiness" which "man received ... from the realisation of his human dignity" and from "love for others".⁷³ This type of simplicity exalts modern man rather than simplifying him.

It is difficult to imagine a number of the best works of modern Soviet literature, such as the country sketches of V. Ovechkin, G. Radov, E. Dorosh, L. Ivanov and others, with their clear-cut themes, or works of a broader, synthetic type such as Tvardovsky's famous poem *Space Beyond Space*, in which the characters do not give considerable thought to the most serious, "eternal" moral problems. The problem of the meaning of life becomes a central one. It occupies an important position in Vladimir Tendryakov's searching and penetrating novels. "Life is complicated, but there is only one truth. This one truth, one way to make life beautiful, must be sought for and found," reflects the young maximalist Sasha in the novel *The Tight Knot*. Andrei Biryukov, the school-teacher in *The Fleeting Day*, ponders: "How should I live in the years to come?" And the author himself states his own standpoint in *The Trial*: "People change more slowly than life itself.... New factories, roads and modern housing are all necessary, but they are not everything. People must be taught how to live."

And this is also the standpoint of modern Soviet literature as a whole.

Naturally we are still talking about the "type of epoch", without ignoring the fact that there are still many people living a petty, vegetative existence and that literature occasionally produces works that fail to convey man's moral potential.

Kostya Prokopenko, the main character in Vera Panova's *Sketch for a Novel*, is unable to break away from the trivial, middle-class way of life into which his wife and mother-in-law have dragged him. It seems as though he has reconciled himself to his failure in life, his lost

ideals. We see him pushing a pram in Tarichev's Park and thinking to himself: "How did it all happen? How could I, a reasonable enough fellow, at least not a scoundrel, with good health, a good profession and a love of order and justice, let them throw my own mother out of the house? Why can't I defend anyone against them? Why are my attempts at defence so useless? I can't even defend you," he thinks, looking at the pink, pocketed, little face in the pram. "They will turn you into the same sort of people as they are, if they want to. Perhaps divorce is the answer? But what about the child? Let's run away together! When you get older we'll drive off on long expeditions together." And he thinks about the long, broad highways running over his vast native land, of the places he has never seen, of geology which he finds very difficult and which it would take years and years to master...."

Kostya seems destined to become a smug philistine, but let us not judge too hastily. He ponders a lot of things:

"Whom one should love and whom one shouldn't.

"By whom you should have children and by whom you shouldn't.

"And how to love.

"And how to live.

"What is good and what is bad.

"And how to tell bad from good.

"He bitterly regretted that he had given so little thought and heed to these things before."

We should wait before we write him off. He may not triumph over his mercantile family, but he will not sell his soul to them or become like them. His moral reflections are not in vain. Kostya is on the threshold of discovering himself as an

individual, but the first step still has to be taken. Dovzhenko's style, characters and treatment of them are very different from Panova's. His Kravchina in *Sea Poem* is far more intelligent, decisive and mature than Kostya.

But although his views on the sort of people like Kostya's wife and mother-in-law are more penetrating and critical, they centre round the same basic problem of how we should live, what is good and what is bad. This is what he has to say about the same smug materialists but irresponsible jobs.

"All right, they're a blot on our copybook. They wriggled their way from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to socialism! But surely they're not coming any further with us? To communism?"

"No, they shouldn't."

"And I won't have it! Take Klyantsev. As soon as we've finished the dam, I'll write a letter myself straight to the Central Committee. Comrades, I won't have it, take the necessary action. Never mind his qualifications, education or position. Out, you scoundrel! Out, you coarse-mouthinged bureaucrat, the people demand it. Out, you heartless egoist."

Kravchina would have made a good father for Kostya Prokopenko.

Soviet literature of today has become more penetrating. Those critics are right who see in it a stronger analytical tendency, a more sociological approach and a multitude of new types. We need only take a look at the novel in the late fifties and sixties to see how many interesting characters were produced by modern Soviet writers, such novels as *Battle en Route* by G. Nikolayeva, *Memory of the Earth* by V. Fomenko, *Into*

the Storm by D. Gramin, *The Staunch and the True* by Y. German, *The Wild Shore* by B. Polevoi, *Truth and Falsification* by M. Stelmakh, *Tronka* by O. Gonchar, *Heart on Sleeve* by I. Shamyakin, *Meeting of the Waters* by I. Ibragimov, *Village on the Crossroads* by I. Avyukh, *Nebit-Dagh* by B. Keibabayev, and *Steppe Ballads* by I. Drutse. Even more recently we have some fine works by Ch. Aitmatov, A. Biehauskas, S. Krutilin, Y. Tissenov, V. Lipatov, V. Belov, A. Ivanov, Y. Gutsalo, N. Dumbadze, I. Guseinov, Abu-Bakar, G. Matevosyan, F. Iskander, V. Kozhevnikov, A. Mukhtar and A. Yakubov. Then there are prose works about the past by such writers as P. Nelin, S. Zalygin, E. Kara-kevich, L. Leonov, K. Fedin, M. Alexeyev, I. Vilde, G. Tyutyunnik, A. Hint, R. Sirge, A. Keshokov, and others, and the war novels of K. Simonov, G. Baklanov, V. Astafyev, L. Pervomaisky, V. Bykov, M. Sluckis, O. Ioselian, M. Birze and A. Kuusberg, to say nothing of the historical novels by S. Borodin, S. Sklyarenko, V. Mikolaitis-Putinas, G. Abashidze and S. Khanzadyan and the autobiographical novels of K. Paustovsky, N. Rylenkov, J. Baltušis, Aibek and many others.

Turning to modern Soviet poetry we find a very rich canvas of human emotions. Its main features are a mature sense of civic responsibility, the warm, direct portrayal of human emotions and a tendency towards a highly philosophical lyricism which does not, however, prevent a great variety of experiment in style and individual intonation. The work of its older representatives is more vivid and pertinent than it has ever been, and the fifties and sixties have witnessed an unparalleled influx of new, young poets.

The older generation
that names are A. B. C.
A. Zelený A. B. C.
L. Matoušek P. Šedivý
A. Vlček A. Štěpán
Chen and others I etc.
made frequent use of the
M. Řehák M. Bažant I etc.
P. Pavlásek S. Černý I etc.
etc. R. Růžek K. Kudela R. C.
etc. E. Míšek J. D. Václav
Záboj M. Toman Štěpán A. I etc.
began writing during the
highly mature period. They
began writing in the following
A. Vojáček P. Švátek V. Š. I etc.
Lubomír V. Kotovský I. Štránský I etc.
Šimková, O. Vaculová M. M. I etc.
mat, O. Šulcmetová and P. Pánek I etc.

But that's enough names. I etc.
but even a small fraction of the
writers

Let us now consider what it is that
Apart from everything else it is there in their
humanist outlook their mode of thinking. It is called
humanism, according to which the aim is that it
a great deal of man in order that his life and
the life of society as a whole may be the most remark-
ably better, purer and finer and one must also
demand a great deal of a society which is con-
cerned that each member should be able to
develop to the full and grow up a man in the
noblest sense of the word.

There is a very clear and universal repetition
of the type of thinking which reduces man to a
stereotype, ignoring his uniqueness.

Juhan Smuul writes with biting irony, highly typical of our time, about one of these stereotypes, the so-called "simple Soviet man". "We find more definitions and adjectives for beans, peas, maize and hybrid beet, than for such a man. I can't figure out when he managed to become simple. Was it in the Civil War when brother fought brother and semi-illiterate peasants in bast sandals sacrificed their lives for what would seem to be abstract ideals? Or during NEP? Or in the great effort of the early five-year plans? Or in the Second World War? Or in the period of the cult of personality when he concealed much that was worrying and tormenting him? I do not know of a single period in the history of our country that could have reversed the immutable law of progression from the simple to the complex.... When communism comes and we have wiped out even petty hooliganism, the inmates of the few remaining prisons will be behind-the-times writers, sucking their paws like bears, who have been given three days for harping on the old tune about the simple Soviet man."

Joking apart, modern Soviet literature gives a central place to all that is unique and original in the individual. There is the famous scene with a twig in the second part of Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* when Arzhanov sets out to teach Davydov a simple lesson which is taken so much to heart because Davydov himself is vitally concerned that people should change for the better in their own individual way and not turn into identical twigs. One of the characters in Gonchar's *Tronka* suddenly comes out with the statement, "We are grass," which rouses a storm of protest. No, people are not grass, they are not cogs. *But the world rests on them and be-*

same blades of grass and dogs are identical
whereas people are different

Different in an infinity of ways from the
longer young children used at school I saw him
in Aksmatov's *Forewall* (Anatoli) who has been
through a great deal but believes in and fights
for Soviet justice to the young slightly chaf-
ing man standing firmly on his own two feet
in Andrey Voznesensky's *Fisherman's* Mono-
logue

It's *we gods* when we work

radiant up to our hair

along board

along board,

like lamps, the salmon fish.

Long live freedom,

the most necessary of freedoms,

work,

work—

like festive, drift we

Work, work .

the currents and aeroplanes,

wailing over the earth.

They too do not sleep with

you

Soot-covered night trains

rush along like you,

their drivers are slipped into them

like a knife in a hilt.

And somewhere above the cyclotron,

enigmatic, like an astronomist,

shining with a ruddy face.

counting his fractions,

Vadik Klimenko,

physicist,

listens to himself.

Naturally this lad who thinks himself a giant is a bit conceited. Voznesensky's lyrical hero, one (and only one) of the transformations of whom is shown here, lives in a truly broad range of feelings. But we must forgive youth for showing off. It is a most understandable and not a very terrible sin.

It is important to see what the old and young Soviet people of today have in common, people who are good comrades, people who are creative.

Who are you?

This question is indeed eternal for humanist literature of all ages and all peoples. Soviet literature also provides its answer. It has revealed and continues to reveal the process of people building a new society and solving the problems which face them, in order that human progress may benefit from it. It has shown and continues to show that this solution of historical tasks, their genuinely humanist solution, is achieved by the struggle of the masses, in the course of which the masses transform themselves. What is more, this is not just an open struggle on the field of battle, but an inner one for human souls, for the eradication of anti-socialist views and beliefs, particularly among those who consider others incapable of producing anything creative, and who regard conscious discipline as something alien to humanism and an organised team as something contrary to the flourishing of the individual. Socialism is the guarantee of true humanism. Socialism is the epoch of man's elevation as the maker of history.



- 29 *Historical Account of Tajik Soviet Literature*, Russ. Ed., Moscow, 1961, p. 36.
- 30 A. Fadeyev, *Thirty Years*, Russ. Ed., Moscow, 1957, pp. 459-60.
- 31 V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 183.
- 32 Lists of writers are not very instructive as a rule, but here I should like nevertheless to list the names of the most outstanding members of the first generation of Soviet writers, the ones who, together with writers of older generations, were faced with the task of laying the foundations in the twenties of the edifice which is called Soviet literature. They were the prose writers D. Furmanov, K. Fedin, A. Vesyoly, I. Babel, V. Ivanov, A. Fadeyev, M. Sholokhov, B. Lavrenyov, A. Malyshkin, L. Seifullina, M. Zoshchenko, L. Leonov, M. Slobodinsky, F. Pansyorov, I. Kataev and A. Platonov, the poets N. Tikhonov, V. Karin, A. Bezmensky, N. Askeyev, I. Selvinsky, E. Bagritsky, M. Svetlov, V. Lugovskoi and A. Surkov, and the playwrights V. Kirshen, V. Vishnevsky and A. Abnogenov. They were the Ukrainian writers P. Tychina, V. Blakitny-Ellan, M. Rylsky, V. Sosyura, I. Kulik, M. Bazhan, P. Usenko, L. Pervomaisky, A. Golovko, P. Panch, I. Le, G. Kotsynba, Y. Yanovskiy, Y. Smolich, A. Dovzhenko, M. Kulish and I. Mikitenko, the Byelorussian writers M. Charot, T. Gartny, Z. Byadulya, M. Lynkov, K. Chorniy, K. Krapiva, P. Trus, A. Aleksandrovich, P. Brovka and P. Glebka, the Georgian writers T. Tabidze, P. Yashvili, G. Leonidze, A. Mirtskhulava, S. Chikovani, I. Abashidze, K. Kaladze, K. Lordkipanidze, P. Chkhikvadze, D. Shengelaya and P. Kakabadze, the Armenian writers E. Charents, N. Zaryan, V. Norents, G. Maari, A. Vshtuni, G. Saryan, A. Bakunts and V. Alazan, the Azerbaijani writers S. Rustam, M. Mushfik, S. Vurgun, R. Rza, S. Gusein, T. Simurg, Abulgasan, Mir Jalal, M. Gusein, M. Ibragimov, the Uzbek writers G. Gulyam, Aibek, K. Alimjan, K. Yashen, A. Kakhkhar and Aيدын, the Karakhan writers S. Saifullin, S. Mukanov, R. Mailan, I. Jansugurov, M. Auezov, G. Ormanov, A. Tashibayev, A. Tokmagambetov and G. Musrepov, the Tatar writers K. Nadjhmi, K. Taktash, M. Jalil, A. Kutui, N. Isanbet, S. Usmanov, G. Minsky and G. Bashirov, and finally the Jewish writers O. Shwartsman, D. Gofshtein, P. Markish, S. Galkin and D. Bergelson. The professional literature of the newly-literate peoples began to emerge in the twenties.

- 20 The Proletkult is the abbreviated name of the Proletarian Culture Association founded in 1917. After October 1917 it became attached to the People's Commissariat of Education as a voluntary organisation of proletarian amateur activity in various spheres of the arts. Its guiding principle was the belief in a special, proletarian culture not connected with traditional literature and art.
- 21 V I Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol 27, p 274
- 22 Quotation from O Torsch's letter to Gorky. See "M Gorky and Soviet Writers Unpublished Correspondence" *Literaturnoye Nasledstvo*, Russ. ed., Vol 70, Moscow, 1963, p 444
- 23 Quotation from Gorky's address at the First All-Union Congress of Writers in 1934. See *M Gorky on Literature* Russ. Ed., Moscow, 1955, p 713
- 24 Masters of the feature-story in Russian literature alone include M Shaginyan, M Pleshvin, K Paustovsky, S Tretyakov, M Koltsov and B Agapov
- 25 The talent and diversity of these generations of writers that emerged in the late twenties and thirties can be seen from a short list of names A Tvardovsky, N Podgorni, N Ostrovsky, Y Krymov, Y Smelyakov, B Gorbatov, Y German, A Malyshko, A Kuleshov, G Abashidze, Zulfiya, M Tursunzade and A Osmonov
- 26 *Literaturnaya Gazeta* No 10 (1933)
- 27 *History of Armenian Soviet Literature*, Russ. Ed., Moscow 1966, p 120
- 28 See, for example, Gorky's speech at the Second Meeting of the Council of the Union of Soviet Writers on March 7, 1935 in *M Gorky on Literature*, p 120
- 29 Ibid., p 783
- 30 Ibid., p 690
- 31 Knut Hamsun, *Americanism and Progress* in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* No 10 (1929).
- 32 *On Party and Soviet Press, A Collection of Documents*, Russ. Ed., Moscow, 1934, pp 343-44
- 33 *LEF* and *New LEF* were magazines published by a group of writers and critics between 1923 and 1928. Mayakovsky was editor-in-chief. The two journals were closely linked with Futurism and propagated the theory of "the literature of fact", the main principle of which was to describe "acts, not people".

- ⁴⁷ Acmeism was a movement in Russian poetry founded between 1910 and 1917 at the time of the crisis in bourgeois culture immediately preceding the revolution, which preached a passive, contemplative acceptance of life in place of the world of social phenomena. As a literary movement it ceased to exist after the October Revolution.
- ⁴⁸ Blue Horns—a literary association of Georgian symbolists founded in 1916.
- ⁴⁹ VAPLITE—a Ukrainian literary organisation which lasted from 1925 to 1928 and adhered to a nationalistic, formalistic standpoint.
- ⁵⁰ *On Party and Soviet Press. A Collection of Documents*, Moscow, 1934, p. 431 (In Russian)
- ⁵¹ Ibid., p. 342.
- ⁵² Ibid., Decision of April 23, 1932, p. 431
- ⁵³ M. Gorky on Literature, Rust. ed., 1935, pp. 727-28
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 727.
- ⁵⁵ A great deal has been written about socialist realism, not all of equal value, by Soviet literary specialists. Serious studies have appeared over the last ten years by such writers as L. Timofeyev, I. Novichenko, B. Bursov, B. Byalik, K. Zelinsky, G. Lomidze, I. Anisimov, B. Ryurikov, V. Ozerov and A. Myasnikov. The author recommends those interested in the theoretical aspect of the question to read the following works: M. Khrapchenko, *October Literature and the Creative Principles of Socialist Literature* (in Russian) in the collection of essays *Literature and Our Times*, Issue 8, Moscow, 1964; B. Mikhailovsky, *Problems of the Concrete-Historical Study of Socialist Realism* (in Russian) in the collection of essays *20th Century Literary Trends*, Moscow, 1964; and A. Metchenko, *The Development of the Theory of Socialist Realism* (in Russian) in the collection of essays *Fifty Years of Soviet Literary Studies*, Moscow, 1964.
- ⁵⁶ W. Kayser, *Die Wahrheit der Dichter*, Hamburg Rwohl, 1961, p. 54-55.
- ⁵⁷ E. Fischer, *Zeitgeist und Literatur. Gebundenheit und Freiheit der Kunst*, Europa Verlag, Wien 1964, p. 11-12.
- ⁵⁸ For more about the history of the development of the concept of the "creative method" see the above mentioned article by A. Metchenko and the article by L. Kuselyova in the collection *Fifty Years of Soviet Literary Studies*, Leningrad, 1964, pp. 360-71.

- 29 Editorial entitled "To Work" in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* for May 23, 1932
- 30 M Gorky, *Collected Works* (in Russian) Vol 27, p 41
- 31 *History of Byelorussian Soviet Literature* (in Byelorussian), Vol. 1, Minsk, 1965, p 103
- 32 M Gorky, *Letters about Literature* (in Russian) Moscow 1957, p 484
- 33 M Gorky on Literature Russ ed p 614
- 34 *Literaturnoye Nasledstvo* Russ ed, Vol 50 p 63
- 35 V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 33 p 487
- 36 Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU of June 30, 1956 *On the Overcoming of the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences*, see *Resolutions of the CPSU*, Part IV, Russ ed Moscow 1960 pp 231, 233
- 37 From A Surkov's address to the Second Congress of Writers of the USSR, see *Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers Verbatim Report* (in Russian) Moscow, 1958, p 17
- 38 From M Bazhan's speech at a writers' meeting in Kiev in 1944 see *Literaturnaya Gazeta* for July 8, 1944 (in Ukrainian)
- 39 There were many of these war generation writers, writers who became popular shortly after the war. Many of them began their literary activity at the front lines or immediately after the end of the war while some had already written their first books in the late thirties, but since we are talking of nation-wide recognition our list (a most incomplete one) includes the Russian writers V Panova, V Nekrasov, V Ovechkin, D Granin, A Chakovskiy, S Zalygin, A Kalinin, A Nedorogonov, S Gudzenko, M Lukonin, S Narovchatov, N Gribachov, A Mezhirev, S Orlov, M Dudin and Y Vinokurov, the Ukrainian writers O Gonchar, M Stelmakh, Y Zhanatsky, V Kozachenko, P Panchenko, M Upenik and P Voronko, the Byelorussian writers I Melesh, Y Bryl and I Shamyakin, the Georgian writers R Margiani, I Noneshvili, S Amisulashvili and A Shengeliya, the Armenian writers S Kaputikyan, A Sagiyan, R Ovanesyan, and G Emin, the Estonian writers J Smuul, R Parve, D Vaarandi, L Prommet, the Moldavian writers I Baltsan, S Shlyakhu and I Chobanu, the Uzbek writers S Rashidov, A Mukhtar, R Babajan and K Gulyam, the Turkmenian writers

A. Kovusov and B. Puriiev, and so on in all the Soviet Socialist Republics.

²⁰ *Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* Moscow, 1971, p. 46

²¹ *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, pp. 43-49

²² *Pravda*, August 31, 1966.

²³ Chinghiz Aitmatov's words from the article "Triumphing Goodness", *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Sept. 11, 1962.

A. KARAGANOV

**The Enrichment
of Artistic
Experience**

rst shown on the
th century and fo-
ained a sensational

novelty with something of the attraction of a
fair ground show. In the latter half of the 1920s
it rose to the artistic level of Greek sculpture,
Renaissance painting, classical music and the
19th-century novel. A large role in this was
played by such films as *Battleship Potemkin*,
October, *Mother*, *The End of St Petersburg*, *A
Descendant of Genghiz Khan*, *Arsenal*, *Earth*,
and theoretical discoveries made by their direc-
tors, Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and
Alexander Dovzhenko. When in 1957 auth-
oritative critics from all over the world met in
Brussels, they named *Battleship Potemkin*,
Mother and *Earth* among the ten best films in
the world, and voted *Battleship Potemkin* the
best film ever produced.

The development of Soviet cinematography is
closely bound with the name of Lenin.

Ten years before the Revolution Lenin once
said in conversation with his comrades that when
the genuine champions of socialist culture gained
control of the cinema it would become one of
the most powerful means of mass education.

After the victory of the Revolution, the
development and utilisation of the cinema were
treated by Lenin as problems of especial impor-
tance. On August 27, 1919 he signed a decree
nationalising the film industry. Although money
was short in the war-ravaged country, the Soviet

Government, headed by Lenin, regularly supplied the necessary funds for buying film and equipment, for organising film production and for training specialists.

Anatoly Lunacharsky writes in his memoirs that, in conversation on the subject, Lenin said again and again that only the Soviet state, having taken upon itself the unprecedented task of re-educating the entire population in the spirit of its proletarian vanguard, could lay claim to a truly cultured film industry and must strive to achieve this aim.

"We must strive for three main aims," Lenin said. The first was to produce widely informative newsreels, properly selected in the spirit of the policy pursued by our best Soviet newspapers. The cinema, in Vladimir Ilyich's opinion, had, moreover, to acquire the character of visual lectures on various questions of science and engineering. He attributed as much, if not more, importance to the propaganda of our ideas in the form of exciting films, infused with our ideology and presenting chunks of real life." In another conversation with Lunacharsky Lenin pointed out that "the production of new films, infused with communist ideas and reflecting Soviet reality, had to begin with newsreels and that, in his opinion, the time to produce feature films had probably not yet arrived".

Needless to say, the propaganda value of newsreels was uppermost in Lenin's mind. Naturally, the facilities of the cinema in those days were taken into account; but so were its prospects. Apart from its immediate results, the work put into newsreels and pictorial publicism was extremely useful to our film makers. They learnt to handle new themes and new material.

could learn little from the decadent melodramas or the Americanised adventure films. Nor could they model their work on the films which merely repeated the discoveries made in the theatre of realism and automatically transferred the theatrical manner of acting and characterisation to the screen.

The need for drastic changes was more acute in the Russian cinema than in the Russian theatre where the Revolution had inspired the bold experiments of Meyerhold and Vakhtangov and where no radical break with the past had to be made. The Moscow Art Theatre and the Maly Theatre were able to draw on the democratic traditions of the pre-revolutionary productions of Gorky, Chekhov, Ostrovsky, as well as on the discoveries made by Stanislavsky to stage *Armoured Train 14-69*, *Lyubov Yarovaya* and other excellent plays of the 1920s. The Soviet cinema, on the other hand, had to start practically from scratch. The new reality engendered by the Revolution had to be assimilated and a new idiom created to embody it. This was to be the general direction followed by the pioneers in their seekings and first experiments.

Lev Kuleshov (who directed *Mr. West in the Land of Bolsheviks*, *According to the Law* and others) gave prominence to montage, but what he had in mind was not simply pasting sequences together for effect. He held that the cinema could not and should not be a supplement to the arts already in existence, their assiduous pupil; it had to develop to the full its plastic powers of expression, its specific gift for conveying the dynamics of life.

The cinema has always been connected with other forms of art, primarily literature and the

cinema entirely new in form with an exposed, solid social base; the cinema of the most informative and sensory type."¹ Eisenstein used the life he saw around him as an argument in the defense of ideas. He translated concepts into the language of art. Since concepts have no plastic definiteness he sought their visual equivalents in the phenomena and facts of life creating images imbued with meaning.

In art a great deal depends on the personality and views of the artist. One and the same objective fact is perceived differently by the man who is delighted with everything, and thinks all existing reality reasonable and the man who tends to be critical. One and the same fact is recorded differently by an artist who is dramatically aware of the contradiction between dream and reality but considers the evil irremediable, and an artist who believes in changes for the better and attempts to place his art in the service of social progress.

Bourgeois ideologists often attack the political bias of revolutionary art mostly because of their dislike for revolutionary politics. They have created and spread the myth that politics are hostile to art and the sanctum of the arts must be protected from politics.

In this respect too, Eisenstein and other masters of the new Soviet cinema enriched the art with a new experiment of unprecedented importance. They listened alertly to the promptings of the turbulent revolutionary period. Their films are a blend of confession and sermon; they throb with revolutionary ardour and faith which unite the artist with the Party of the Revolution. They correct their aesthetic ideals as new socialist relations become shaped. The artist's revolu-

tionary bias becomes his source of emotion and romance, the inner light that illuminates the facts and allows him to probe the depths of phenomena and reveal their essence. When film art was placed at the service of the Revolution it acquired creative impulses and social experience which gave new strength to its realistic portrayal of the people as the makers of history.

In order to appreciate more fully Eisenstein's and his associates' novel handling of the theme in the cinema, let us recall Engels's letter to Lassalle about the historical drama *Franz von Sickingen*. Engels considers Lassalle's play too abstract because it does not give enough emphasis to the plebeian and peasant factors.

"In accordance with my view of the drama, which consists in not forgetting the realistic for the idealistic, Shakespeare for Schiller, the inclusion of the sphere of the so superbly variegated plebeian society of that day would have supplied, in addition, quite other material for enlivening the drama, a priceless background for the national movement of the nobility playing in the foreground, and would have set this movement in the proper light"². Marx too criticised this play along the same lines.

The socialist revolution was a new type of liberation struggle. The background came out onto the forefront of history. The man of labour became the main reorganiser of the world. This being so, the principles of realism could not remain unchanged. The socialist revolution gave art a new conception of man and engendered in the artist a new attitude to reality.

In *Battleship Potemkin*, Eisenstein is not a bystander, he does not assume the superior attitude of a great sage, nor does he grovel in senti-

mental admiration before the rebels. He is in the midst of his heroes, he is one of them, he fights their battle with them, thus affording the viewer the intense joy of involvement. We, the spectators, take part in the events on the battleship and on the streets of Odessa. It is we who are being shot. We shout, together with Vakulinchuk: "Brothers! Who are you shooting at?" We feel we are standing ready at the guns, prepared to die in the unequal battle with the Admiral's squadron. And we triumph as we pass under the red flag through the squadron formation, welcomed by our class brothers from the other ships.

In this film, the logic of social thought is inseparable from the flux of emotions, both the author's and the viewer's. Eisenstein uses montage to highlight the most important moments of the rising. Each time he finds the precise rendering of the change in people's mood and in the turn of events. The film is polyphonic, varying its rhythms from the tense slowness of the preparations for the shooting of the sailors under tarpaulin, to the dynamic scenes of the mutiny with their abrupt shifting of range and startling details; and again from the slow, mournful procession of the crowd at Vakulinchuk's coffin, from the lyricism of misty nights and the gliding of holiday yachts on the smooth, calm sea, to the tragic scenes on the stairway in Odessa where the impact is achieved by contrasting the measured, brutish march of the soldiers with the feverish commotion of their victims. In this way Eisenstein builds up the diversity of emotions that strengthen the impact on the spectator and gives him a feeling of involvement in the enthusiasm, joy, sorrow and anger of the crowds of sailors and townspeople.

life lead people like her to join the revolutionary struggle. He considered it of paramount importance to show the Revolution as the deed of millions of working people, to show up the circumstances that inevitably lead to a mass movement.

This same style of depicting the Revolution and the revolutionary masses on an epic scale is employed by Alexander Dovzhenko in his early works. His films are imbued with poetic emotionality, they are full of metaphors and images which assume the character of romantic symbols. Dovzhenko often compresses history into the individual lives of his characters. He boldly combines fiction with documentaries, epics with lyricism, and solemnity with satire. He includes fiction in such significant contexts that it is perceived as a poetical rendering of reality. Take the scene of Timosh's execution in *Arsenal* where he himself gives the orders to the firing squad. The bullets riddle his body, but it is the general watching the execution who falls dead; he had wanted to destroy the people, he had made an attempt on the life of the Revolution and the result was that he himself was condemned. By using the language of screen symbols, Dovzhenko thus shows the righteousness of the Revolution.

The early 1920s also saw a vigorous development in Soviet documentary films. Dziga Vertov, the dean of Soviet documentaries, elaborated the methods—both in theory and practice—which are widely used in the world today. He made extensive use of the hidden camera, and all the means available to the photographer to show real people, without pose, mask or make-up, to read their thoughts and divine their personalities. The

keenness of his perception and his vision lent his documentaries a hitherto unparalleled impact.

He was so skilled at arranging his sequences that the documentary film began to speak the emotional language of inspired, visual publicism, and from a simple recorder of facts developed into a means of rendering the "communist view of the world". Vertov's *Kinopravda* serials and his films *Three Songs about Lenin*, *One-Sixth of the World*, *Forward March*, *Soviet* and *Donbas Symphony* belong to the classics of the cinema ranking with the films made by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko.

Vertov was followed by Esfir Shub who directed *The Fall of the Romanovs*, *The Russia of Nicholas II* and *Lev Tolstoi* and *The Great Road*.

Her clarity of purpose, intelligent and sensitive use of montage, enabled Shub to use even the newsreels of the royal family made by court cameramen for a revolutionary interpretation of history. They were made with a worshipful respect for the tsar and his entourage but in Esfir Shub's film they are perceived as an embodiment of haughty smugness, arrogance and parasitical idleness; and in her ironic handling these old sequences become a powerful denunciation. By analysing the documentary films of the past by means of montage, she reveals the decay of the tsarist regime, the real direction of history and the invincible revolutionary and creative strength of the people.

V. Turin's film *Turksib* has won world renown. It is a moving documentary about the people who built the Turkestan-Siberia railway.

The early films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and

Dovzhenko, with the epic scale of their representation of events and the accent on the harmony between the individual and the masses, help one to understand the Revolution as a movement of millions. The image of the Revolution, of the fighting people, is illuminated by an inner light of revolutionary romanticism. The idiom is essentially poetic, the vast amount of factual material is converted into meaningful images, thought is as condensed as it is in poetry, and a tense reconstruction of the events by means of montage takes the place of a verbose narration.

These pioneers of the Soviet cinema made epic films not only because of their own revolutionary enthusiasm. They were also influenced by certain psychological difficulties in the development of revolutionary art at the time: it was faced with the most difficult task of representing the scope of unprecedented events which had not yet become crystallised in artistic form or had been studied in detail.

It cannot be denied that these films have their weak points. The pictures of the revolutionary struggle lack the presence of clearly defined individual characters. The makers of these films were as yet unskilled in bringing out psychological details, in exploring the subtle and usually inimitable transitions from one mood to the next. As a result, we are not shown the dialectic of the transformation of social laws into motives governing the actions of people, nor the individual nuances in these actions.

It is quite understandable that towards the end of the 20s and the beginning of the 30s the need for new principles and forms in representing the Revolution on the screen made itself

more and more clearly felt. But the fact that the forms prevailing in the early films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko had begun to outlive themselves by no means indicates that these films were immature or that "character films" were totally superior to them.

People's artistic development has never proceeded in a straight, ascending line. The history of art is full of paradoxes; it does not stand up to a schematical analysis. In the course of its development art not only conquers new heights but also suffers losses, often irreparable ones.

In a simplified account of the Soviet cinema one could say that the main theme in the 20s was the masses in the Revolution and in the 30s, Man in the Revolution. The films of the 30s went further in portraying man, in exposing individual characters and their complexity. But the films of the 20s also had their merits: a film such as *Battleship Potemkin* could far better convey the general image of the Revolution and the romance of the struggle than could the psychological films of the 30s. And it would not be historically correct to compare these films according to their measure of historical veracity. The fact that *Battleship Potemkin* presents a less definite picture of individuals than the later psychological films does not mean that it is inferior to them—its specific style must not be mistaken for its weakness.

The best films of the 20s depict the Revolution in its youth. Their appeal lies in their romantic quality. They could not appear in their classical form in the next decade. A new era demanded new means of expression.

Sound films made their appearance at the end of the 20s. The new equipment at the cinematographer's service required him to readjust his entire approach and his way of thinking. But the main thing was that life was changing. It was clear to all that the socialist transformation of society was a long process, demanding persistent, everyday toil.

Towards the end of the 20s, the subject of a man's conversion to the Revolution lost its former topicality and therefore its freshness in artistic presentation. The film maker now had to show what this man, the builder of the new world, was doing how the new social system was affecting his personality and how the new qualities he had acquired in the course of struggle and work in the name of socialism were in their turn influencing his social effort.

The new orientation in Soviet cinema told on the choice of film heroes. In the films of the 1920s they were the soldiers whose victory will always be the greatest meat in their soup. *Call to Arms!*, the down-to-earth Red Army Major, the diligent peasant who became a successful industrial worker (*The Fall of the Patriarch*), an ardent atheist, *Myself and Others*, who with the assistance of *Decay and Death*, *Death and Decay*, and others, in his quest after the life of man, becomes a most ironical protagonist (*Barber of Seville*), the hard-working doctor of a part of the city, the Alabamian Zashke and many others. In the 1930s, however, the heroes of the new Socialist Revolution had to prove to the world that socialism had a right to exist.

worker who was one of Lenin's assistants, and Lenin himself (*Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918* by Mikhail Romm). People also grew to love such characters as the Party worker Shakhov (*The Great Citizen* by Fridrikh Ermler), the collective-farm chairman Alexandra Sokolova (*A Member of the Government* by Alexander Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits), the village teacher Lautin (*The Teacher* by Sergei Gerasimov), the characters in Ivan Pyryev's celebrated comedies *The Tractor-Drivers*, *The Pig-Tender and the Shepherd* and in Grigory Alexandrov's *The Circus* and *Volga-Volga*.

At the same time the Soviet cinema underwent pronounced changes in style. Instead of the generalised and poetic picture of the Revolution films now went in for a historically concrete analysis of the revolutionary development of life; instead of depicting types, a profound study was made of individual personalities, instead of the metaphorical idiom they now used screen prose.

This transition was not entirely painless and simple, of course. The directors who adopted the methods of the psychological film about everyday life were often criticised by the more persistent defenders of the old films. The hottest debates raged round the film *Counterplan* by Fridrikh Ermler and Sergei Yutkevich, dealing with routine factory affairs. Many critics refused to accept this film, considering it a departure from the glorious traditions of *Battleship Potemkin* and *Mother*. Some saw in it "a mixture of the theatre and the hackneyed techniques of early cinematography", others wrote about its "lack of form", and accused the authors of oversimplification and betrayal of the cinema's specific qualities.

The debate raged fiercely but in the end the "prosaic" cinema of characters got the better of it. This change of style was not a wanton negation of everything that had been discovered, it was by no means a reappraisal of values. The main theme of Soviet films remained what it was—the Revolution in action. So did the aim outlined by Lenin: to create films imbued with communist ideas and reflecting Soviet life. In the new historical conditions, film makers mostly saw their task in disclosing the revolutionary spirit and romance in the work of building a new life.

Embodying the Soviet reality during the first five-year plans on the screen called for new forms, plots and techniques to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary, the everydays in their exciting collisions, the significance and complexity of the evolution in people's mentality.

Man's ennoblement in the process of creative labour is faithfully portrayed in such films as *The Road to Life* by Nikolai Ekk, *The Land Is Thirsty* by Yuly Raizman, *Peasants* by Fridrikh Ermler, *Seven Bold Men* and *Komsomolsk* by Sergei Gerasimov, and *A Great Life* by Leonid Lukov. In these films, the heroes' work effort and their struggle for socialism are rendered as a historical development of the Revolution: the idea of the live contact between the generations of revolutionaries remains the most important part of the Soviet artist's world outlook and one of the most powerful motive forces of his art.

Among the various social and aesthetic problems that worried the Soviet film makers of the 30s one was how to make the best use of the cinema's properties as mass entertainment.

In 1929, film director Petrov-Bykov wrote an



with a convincing reply to the vulgarisers who tried to create a barrier between the 20s and 30s. It is true that not all the discoveries of the 20s were immediately appreciated by the public, but the Soviet cinema could not have developed so rapidly if these discoveries had not been made. *Battleship Potemkin* is great in itself but its greatness is added to by *Chapayev* which grew out of the revolutionary epic. Such films as *The New Babylon* and *S.U.D.* were the groundwork, so to speak, for the *Marim* trilogy by Grigory Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg; there is a link between *Arsenal* and *Shehors* by Alexander Dovzhenko, between Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* and Boris Barnet's *The Outskirts*. The work done in the 30s on the theme of the Revolution was greatly influenced by the experience of Nikolai Shengelaya who made *Eliso* and *26 Commissars* in the late 20s.

Films like Abram Rohm's *Third Meshchan-skaya Street* launched the genre of modern drama which became especially popular in the 30s.

The gains of the 20s facilitated the making of such historical films as *Peter the Great* (Vladimir Petrov), *Bogdan Khmelnitsky* (Igor Savchenko) and *Alexander Nevsky* (Sergei Eisenstein). The early experience of filming classical works of literature was further developed by Grigory Roshal and Vera Stroeva in *Petersburg Night*, by Amo Bek-Nazarov in *Pepo*, by Yakov Protazanov in *The Dowerless Bride*, and by Mark Donskoi in Gorky's *Childhood*.

It is not my intention to belittle the artistic discoveries of the 30s by these comparisons, for they were indeed discoveries. The film makers of the 30s drew their ideas and images mostly

from the life, struggle and labour of their contemporaries. But another important source was the revolutionary art of the 20s.

The films of the 30s, which embodied and synthesised the progress of life and art, scored a triumph with millions of viewers. The role of the cinema in the life of the people grew tremendously. The showing of *Chapayev*, *Maxim's Youth*, *We Are from Kronstadt* and *The Great Citizen* were major events, delighting millions of people.

In the transition from the 20s to the 30s, the Soviet cinema did not lower its standards, it did not go downhill from the heights of poetry to mere prose, nor did it adjust itself to the tastes of the unenlightened viewer. The process was more complicated than that and embraced both the cinema and the public.

Grigory Kozintsev, one of the makers of the trilogy about Maxim, recalls: "...Our work turned out to be congenial to the viewers. It became apparent from the very first show that they shared our thoughts and feelings.... One could simply no longer think in terms of 'us' and 'the viewers'. We were one, we were countrymen, we believed in the same things, suffered for the same reasons, wanted to work in a new fashion though we often had not the experience, we stumbled and hurt ourselves badly, and got down to work again. Real life and life on the screen were now moving simultaneously. The man on the screen was the spokesman of the people in the auditorium, they were his kinsmen".⁴

The contact between the screen and the viewers was largely due to the hero of the revolutionary films made in the 1930s, for this hero embodied

revolutionary humanism. The cruelty and injustice of the old world were combated by a man endowed with winning charm, and the cause to which he devoted his life was illumined by the light of the socialist ideal. The viewer's attitude to this hero was emotional and personal. He became acquainted with him as one makes the acquaintance of an attractive person in real life who then becomes a close friend.

The cinema of the 30s demonstrates how a person's devotion to the cause of the Revolution and his sense of belonging to the people who turned the course of history, enrich his life by giving him new motives for his actions and a new understanding of the ties between revolutionary discipline and freedom of the individual.

Chapayev's personality did not become less striking because he subdued his recklessness and bravado under the influence of his commissar. It was not an influence of a strong will upon a weak one: the commissar helped Chapayev to assimilate the Party's experience gained in many years of hard struggle, an experience which proved that a revolutionary could develop his abilities to the full and triumph in his actions only in conditions of revolutionary discipline and self-organisation and only in a community of fellow-fighters.

Chapayev, Maxim, Polezhayev, Shakhov, Shchors, Sokolova and other heroes of the best films of the 30s were gifted people who stood out of the crowd. The Revolution was a life-giving force, a source of spiritual and moral development.

The cinema of the 30s was notable for its variety of individual methods and styles but they all followed one general trend. These can be

clearly illustrated by comparing two films with a certain similarity in themes and heroes, *Chapayev* and *Shchors*.

In *Chapayev*, first the author of the novel Dmitry Furmanov and then the Vasilyev brothers who directed the film wondered if they ought to show Chapayev with all the peculiarities and complexities of his character Alexander Dovzhenko who made *Shchors* was concerned with totally different problems. When he came to the dream part, he demanded that the clearest colours should be used, that the actors should be good-looking and serious, and that the hero's eyes should glow with intelligence and noble feelings. The wounded were bandaged with clean bandages. In this case the director did not want realistic details: everyday life was irrelevant, only the Civil War existed, victory, and lulls between battles. In these minutes of respite Shchors talks excitedly to his fellow-soldiers about the future and how people will remember the present—the birth of a new world in bloody revolutionary battles. His words sound like a poem.

In the analogous scene in *Chapayev* everything was done in the ordinary way. And Chapayev says in an ordinary voice to Petka: "You know what life's going to be like? You'll never want to die." Clearly, these two different scenes will appeal to two different types of people, depending on their individual disposition and taste. But as far as the development of the cinema goes both scenes have something to offer.

Shchors shows that despite the significant changes in the cinema at the turn of the 20s and 30s, the traditions of the 20s were alive in the cinematography of the 30s. Dovzhenko's

Shchors is usually associated with Efim Dzigan's *We Are from Kronstadt* (screenplay by Vsevolod Vishnevsky), which seems to revive the screen epic of the Revolution, and might be a sequel to *Battleship Potemkin*. The plot and the construction of the sequences once again acquire a romantic exultation, a singing, poetic quality. But these traits of the heroic epic go together with a deeper insight into the psychology of the characters.

Thus we see that in the 30s, just as in the 20s and today, the Soviet cinema developed along different tracks. The general tendencies and changes of any one period of its development manifest themselves in a diversity of stylistic trends and artistic experiments. Such diversity often brings different artists together and they join forces. But sometimes—and there are no few cases in the Soviet film world—it gives rise to disputes and film makers try to prove their point on the screen. If we were to compare Dzigan and Vishnevsky's *We Are from Kronstadt* where the mood is poetically exalted, with the Zarkhi and Kheifits's "chamber" psychological film *Deputy of the Baltic*, we would immediately see that even in handling the same or closely related theme of the Civil War, different subjects and stylistic renderings were found, a different atmosphere was created, different emotional keys were used, and different means of presenting events and characters.

Films about Lenin hold a special place among the productions of the 30s. Work on them was begun in 1936, in preparation for the 20th anniversary of the October Revolution. Playwrights Alexei Kapler and Nikolai Pogodin, directors Mikhail Romm and Sergei Yutkevich, and actors

Boris Shchukin and Maxim Shtraukh undertook this extremely responsible task to produce a living image of Lenin from known works, photos, documentary films, historical research and reminiscences. That entailed reproducing not only what was known but also guessing at the course of Lenin's thoughts, and revealing the inner logic of his behaviour in different situations which had not been recorded in any documents.

An analysis of the structure of the films *Lenin in October*, *Lenin in 1918* and *Man with a Rifle* shows that their makers sought the traits of the great revolutionary leader in the person of this flesh-and-blood man, someone they had seen and understood in all the inimitability of his character. They had to take care that details from everyday life should not overshadow the main thing, but then again Lenin should not be an abstract figure whose greatness hid those human qualities for which people loved and understood him.

The first films about Lenin, as were those about Chapayev, Maxim, Polezhayev and Shakhov, were made during the first five-year plans. It was a time of great transformations: the backward agrarian country was changing into a developed industrial power with a large-scale agriculture. Side by side with information on new socialist projects the papers printed accounts of the daring flights of Chkalov and Gromov, of the feats of Papanin and his fellow-explorers, and of the records of the Stakhanovites. War reports from Madrid were read with tense interest. Spanish heroes arriving in the Soviet Union fresh from battle against the fascists were greeted with tears of emotion. People talked of the Soviet men who were fighting the fascists in the Spanish sky and

on the Spanish land. We were proud of them and envied them.

The achievements of socialist construction and the heroic battles against fascism were associated in our minds with 1917 and interpreted as an implementation of the tasks of the Revolution and its continuation. This redoubled the force of the revolutionary enthusiasm. And the first films about Lenin and about the heroes of the Revolution came as an aesthetic expression of our revolutionary ardour.

The new traditions were continued in the grim years of the Great Patriotic War in films such as *Regional Secretary* by Ivan Pyryev, *She Fought for Her Country* by Fridrikh Ermler, *Two Fighters* by Leonid Lukov, *The Rainbow* by Mark Donskoi, and others. The war brought new themes and emotions to the cinema. In order to understand why these films were so harsh one must bear in mind that 20 million Soviet people died in the war and that it was a particularly difficult one. It is natural that realism acquired new nuances—sharpness, even harshness (*The Rainbow*) and ruthlessness which opposes any attempt to smooth over the horrors of reality in order to induce a false sense of security. Everything is shown in its true light and everything is called by its true name whether it be a heroic exploit, cowardice or treachery. These war films often bare their makers' thoughts, emphasising them with publicistic and artistic means. There is no intriguing vagueness about them.

The documentary films made during the war were a seat of heroism, both civic and artistic. The newsreels they made at the front were watched anxiously by the fighters themselves and by the workers in the rear. These reels were

book of the same name by Alexander Fadeyev, portrays the happenings in their stark truth, and gives us a deep insight into the characters. Gerasimov's gift of a genre painter is fully in evidence here. He clearly sees the main thing that guides the Young Guard people but at the same time has an eye for the details that make the screen representation so true to life. The film is about a group of boys and girls in Krasnodon, a mining town, who formed an underground organisation to fight the nazi invaders. These young people—Oleg Koshevoi, Ulyana Gromova, Sergei Tyulennin, Lyubov Shevtsova embody the spiritual and moral character of their generation. They have a revolutionary outlook on the world, courage and fortitude in the face of mortal danger, romantic flights of thought combined with a businesslike perseverance in pursuing their aims.

3

In the middle fifties the production of films was sharply increased. Soon as many as 115-120 films were released every year. New blood revitalised the industry and people of different generations started working together, which they had not been able to do during the time of the "film-famine".

An important part in this rejuvenation of the cinema was again played by the USSR Cinema Institute. Every year it graduates many script writers, directors, cameramen, actors and artists who have completed a four-year course under experienced teachers. Almost every outstanding Soviet film master, including Eisenstein, has taught at the institute. The directors' department has long

¹ *² by Sergei Gerasimov.

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Between 1950 and 1955 the new graduates were

on the whole older than the pre-war ones. Most of them had fought in the war. Grigory Chukhrai who directed the *Ballad of a Soldier* had been wounded five times.

Chukhrai and his contemporaries—veterans of the Second World War—worked side by side with the generation of Eisenstein, Kozintsev, Romm and Ermler who remembered the year 1917 and the Civil War, and with directors, cameramen and actors who began their film careers during the first five-year plans. In the mid-fifties this third generation, together with experts of the older generations, had to start mass film production.

The change was not merely one of quantity. In an atmosphere of general enthusiasm for a creative endeavour the Soviet cinema found not only new themes and characters but also new artistic forms. A dynamic movement in art was re-established and the method of socialist realism developed. When correctly understood, this method has nothing in common with the canons which freeze art. Socialist realism is the dynamic aesthetics of a dynamic art.

The best films of the 50s and 60s showed a marked reaction against the clichés which had been cultivated in the unproductive period. They seemed to say: one ought not to approach art with preconceived ideas. One must explore life, dig deep, not be afraid of the unexpected, which might oppose one's usual notions, in order to understand the inner meaning of these surprises, their cause and result. In order to keep up with the times in art it is not enough to replace one method by another, one must have a feeling for the times, know life, perceive its movement. It is always important to analyse the relation of art

to reality and of the spectator to art but perhaps it is even more important to analyze the attitude of the spectator to reality. Soviet cinema has done much to lend the criteria of truth a genuinely contemporary significance.

More films about Lenin were made in *Stalin* about Lenin and later in *Lenin in Poland* by George Vukovich continued the tradition of such films as *Lenin in October*, *Lenin in 1919* and *Man with a Gun*, revealing the inner logic of Lenin's thought. *Heart of a Mother* and *Mother's Devotion* have been thrown abroad as well as in the Soviet Union. In these films Mark Donskoi recaptures the high moral atmosphere reigning in the Ulyanov family. Soviet film makers, as well as writers and people engaged in other branches of the arts were proud to hear the following high praise of "a number of interesting novels, plays and films about Lenin, all of them permeated with revolutionary passion and the grandeur of devotion to Leninism" in the Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 24th Party Congress delivered by Leonid Brezhnev.

The fact that modern viewers are so keen on the films about Lenin demonstrates how much the Revolution means to them and how topical the lessons drawn from it. The films on modern themes made today show a distinct tendency to connect the present day with the past by a continuity of the revolutionary tradition. Thus, films about Lenin himself are directly followed by films about Leninism, that is, about the implementation of Lenin's ideas in practice.

The Soviet cinema belongs to the people who first accomplished a socialist revolution and embarked on the unexplored road of socialist

the Revolution—is developed here in an interesting manner, showing how a person's character is influenced by his involvement in the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants. We see how a semi-literate, awkward girl grows into an artist, a personality with an inner beauty. A revolutionary perception of the world gives the characters of the film, young and old, an unshakable conviction in the rightness and splendour of the cause they are serving. Their inspired dedication to the Revolution can be discerned even in their routine everyday affairs.

Many of the new films about the Great Patriotic War make a research into heroism. Good examples are Nikolai Birman's *Chronicle of the Swooping Bomber* and Vasily Tregubovich's *A la guerre comme à la guerre*. Both films show the everyday events of war convincingly, with truly artistic attention to detail: one is about an aerodrome and the life of the bomber crew, and the other about a tank unit and the crew of a self-propelled gun. The heroes of the two films are by no means saints (the crew of the bomber is even sent to the guardhouse in a body). But through the ups and downs of army life, through the incidental and trifling happenings, we glimpse the main factor which determines their behaviour at the critical moment. The films do not stress this main, inner factor and it is never put into so many words, for that would mean talking in an elevated style, which is simply not done. But when the war requires it, this deep-seated factor rises to the surface and these ordinary boys behave like heroes.

Every man arrives at heroism in his own way. With one it is an impulse, a natural urge. Another has to first mobilise all his will. Performing

a feat does not always come easy, it takes an effort to overcome not only external, but also internal obstacles, such as perplexity in a difficult situation or fear in the face of mortal danger. These two films show soldiers who cast all fears aside and perform their feats of heroism with no thought of self-glorification. They do not have the mentality of professional soldiers for whom death is one of the hazards of their profession. They are brought to acts of heroism by the ideology of a Soviet patriot who fights for a noble cause. They can brave death without an admiring public to encourage them and even without the commander's order—their civic conscience urges them on.

For Soviet people these heroic films are not simply historical documents. They bring to mind the boys who fought on the Island of Damansky in a manner worthy of their fathers who stormed Berlin in 1945.

These days, when our modern youth is discussed, people sometimes criticise them for lacking public spirit and, in their dislike of bombast, for deliberately belittling the lofty words which the Komsomol members of the 30s held sacred. Is this a superficial or a more serious phenomenon? It must be admitted that there are such morally depleted people among our Soviet youth, but they are by no means typical, nor do they lead others after them. Suffice it to mention the performance on the Island of Damansky, the reclamation of the virgin lands and the Siberian construction projects where our young people really showed their worth. The Soviet cinema is now faced with the challenging task of discerning behind the casual style of behaviour and the talk which differs so much from the oratorical

outspokenness of the 30s, those qualities which link the present younger generation with the men who stormed the Winter Palace and with the heroes of Stalingrad. It is up to the cinema to disclose their revolutionary quality and moral integrity from which they draw courage in battle and energy in work.

In the 50s and 60s, interest was focussed on the daily life and endeavour of Soviet people. A psychological study of their contemporaries was made by Iosif Kheifits in *A Large Family*, Lev Kulijanov and Yakov Segel in *The House Where I Live*, Marlen Khutsiev and Felix Mironov in *Spring on Zarechnaya Street*, Alexander Zarkhi in *Height*, Lev Kulijanov in *When the Trees Were Tall*, Igor Talankin and Georgy Danelia in *Seryozha*, Mikhail Shveitser in *In-Laws*, Alexei Saltykov in *The Chairman*, Frunze Dovlatyan in *Hullo, It's Me!*, Vadim Derbenyov in *The Last Month of Autumn*. The characters in these films are shown in action as they tackle important problems on their own, revealing new traits of people brought up under socialism.

In this connection I should like to say a few words about Mikhail Kalatozov's film *The Cranes Are Flying* and its hero Boris.

The plot revolves not around Boris but around Veronica. Nevertheless he is the hero throughout the film, even when he no longer appears on the screen. The point is that Veronica's drama becomes comprehensible only in relation to Boris's character and fate. He is Veronica's conscience. He is the criterion by which she measures her mistakes, and in her memories of him she finds the strength to face life anew.

Modern Soviet society expects people to be more self-reliant and to assume a greater personal

lovich. It deals with topical problems in the form of an argument. The questions it poses are asked point-blank, with no evasiveness tolerated. The dialogue is mostly about business matters concerning production and science, rarely going over to philosophical, political and moral problems. But it is essentially a dialogue about revolutionary philosophy, politics and morals.

The film is constructed in such a way that Gubanov, and his proposals, which he advances just before the adoption of important decisions in state policy, personify the general trend in Soviet life of the 1950s and 1960s when the beneficial changes gave rise to new problems and different worries. These changes place higher demands upon each worker by whose efforts they are accomplished. *Your Contemporary* takes a serious look at the new moral criteria (which combine moral requirements with ideological and political ones). People like Vasily Gubanov take a realistic view of both inventions and accomplishments, they soberly analyse the situation and act in accordance with the existing conditions, always with good grounds for their actions. They act with the measure of independence to which they are entitled by their knowledge of the work, their sense of personal responsibility for the fate of communism, and their feeling that it is in their particular job that, in any situation, they embody the Party and Soviet power.

The modern Soviet spectator has assimilated the experience and trials of wars and the uncharted building of socialism and the joy of victories attained. His thinking has become more realistic and sophisticated, he is intolerant of bragging, self-deception and any pretence of the truth. The Party teaches the peo-

ole to take a sober and serious approach to life if socialist realism needed an additional adjective descriptive of the peculiarities in present-day life, we would suggest the word analytical.

The major social and philosophical problems of the century are rendered on a high intellectual plane. The main characters in Mikhail Romm's *Nine Days of One Year* are scientists; they discuss their professional affairs, the place of physics in modern society, and quite naturally go on to philosophical and social questions, the fate of the world and mankind in general. The fact that in their profession they can either fabulously enrich the world or destroy millions of people makes the dialogue all the more interesting.

In another of his films called *Ordinary Fascism* Romm himself is the main character. This is not a straightforward documentary. It is rather a film of reflection, spiritual seekings, tense thought, wrath. Romm is the thinker who analyses the history of nazism, and also a fighter at the anti-fascist front. He shows the crimes of fascism in order to brand the criminals forever. He recalls the past in order to give warning for the future.

Just like the pioneers of Soviet cinema contemporary film makers are clearly attracted by the people of a revolutionary cast, in their actions and very way of thinking. They lovingly show people who refuse to live like moles immersed in their own personal comfort, people who do not say it is no business of theirs when issues of vital importance to the majority want tackling. The mentality of the petty bourgeois is hateful to these people, and they despise his egocentricity. Rather than live the tranquil existence of the on-looker isolating himself from

social interests and conflicts, they pursue... struggle and find a great moral satisfaction in it.

A number of critics of the Soviet cinema abroad consider the heightened interest in heroes and exploits somehow old-fashioned and out of step with the times. These critics are convinced that man is naturally selfish and cowardly and consequently they look for an ulterior motive in anyone who performs a heroic deed. A heroic life dedicated to others is an illusion, they say, and a romantic presentation of afeat is just fiction.

Such criticism nearly always has its share of self-deception born of egocentric thought.

Philistines always play down virtue. Their sceptical attitude has acquired greatly involved and widespread form. An artist or critic who shares this attitude fancies that he has lived through all nine circles of Dante's hell, seen everything and heard everything. But in actual fact his outlook on life is very narrow for he only sees that which feeds his scepticism and pessimism; he paints everything in the sombre tones of his own soul. And this darkness, caused by a warped social vision, blinds him to the real contradictions which impel life.

The Soviet cinema affirms the realistic perception of life based on a firm faith in the people and in social progress. When the subject is man, Soviet film makers reject the alarmist fantasies of the pessimists that he is fatally corrupt and doomed to languish to the end of his days in the dungeon of his ego. From the experience of social criticism levelled at the real imperfections of their society and by depicting how vital problems are solved by the Party and the people they assimilate the truth which is confirmed every

day—that as man changes the world he changes himself. They are able to see what new opportunities have been provided for the education and self-education of people in the socialist transformation of material existence and in the moral climate of Soviet society.

Humanism which characterises Russian art as a whole is very prominent in Soviet films. When people abroad see *Ballad of a Soldier* or *The Cranes Are Flying* they invariably comment on the purity and kindness of the sentiments they find in these films and often emphasise how important it is for the contemporary world to oppose soul-killing cynicism and indifference with humaneness, respect for man and faith in man. The heroes of the best Soviet films personify the moral equivalent of the Revolution, the change in people's notions, habits and behaviour patterns, in feelings and thoughts under the influence of the new organisation of society created by the Revolution.

The shaping of the new type of man is a long and complicated process. Soviet film makers, studying the manifestations of this process, try to show their contemporary not as a one-dimensional figure, as a sort of didactically instructive model, but in the fulness of his spiritual and moral development which is the only way he can become an example for others. They do not wait for this or that quality to become a permanent feature of the new type of man but follow up these qualities in the actual process of their formation, in the struggle between opposing tendencies. This research is necessary not only to satisfy artist's eternal curiosity, but also in order to be able to interfere more actively in real life.

Recently Soviet films have been featuring peo-

pic who at the various moments turning points ... the history of the last few decades try to work out a new understanding of their links with the community, their place in the world, and find a new way of realising their ideal and the measure of their responsibility for its attainment. In films such as Matlen Khutsiev's *I'm Twenty* and Sergei Gerasimov's *The Journalist* the young heroes go through the difficult period of achieving civic and moral maturity. The makers of these films reveal the inseparability of politics and morals which determine the behaviour of the present younger generation.

Soviet critics have written about the infantility of many of these young film personages. I am not sure whether the word "infantility" is accurate in this context, for in some respects these young people are more sophisticated than the people of the same age who lived in the 1930s and 1940s. As a rule they read more and know more about contemporary science. In my opinion it would be more correct to speak of the retarded development of their social sense. This is illustrated for example in Khutsiev's *July Rain*. The young men and women depicted in this film remain infants both socially and politically when they are over 20 and even 30, whereas in the 1930s Komsomol members of the same age organised collective farms, built the Magnitogorsk plant, and became leaders of shock-workers teams.

But though *July Rain* is concerned with this retarded social development, the concern does not reach the stage of frank alarm or turn into a polemic with undertones of indignation. The makers of this film simply observe the characters and show how in their circle spiritual activity and intercourse are substituted by idle wit and

how feelings become insipid. It is evidently assumed that the danger of a spiritual void which threatens the characters in the film will be appreciated by the viewer without being pointed out dramatically. As a result, the film becomes merely descriptive, establishing facts in a semi-passive manner.

Films such as *Three Days in the Life of Victor Chernyshev* by Mark Osepyan treat the younger generation in a totally different style and tone and, in my opinion, more resolutely.

In many respects Victor Chernyshev resembles the characters in Khutsiev's film. He takes life easy, his principle is "Why should I stick my neck out?" and he drifts along with current. But life keeps presenting him with problems which he cannot sweep aside and to solve them he must take a definite stand.

In connection with problems facing youth I must mention Stanislav Rostotsky's *Until Monday*. This is a film about a school but the conflicts described in it are far deeper and broader. Both the teachers and pupils are shown as individuals, each with his own problems, and these problems are often interrelated. The personality of the teacher is as important an educative factor as the lessons they teach. The film affirms honesty and education by truth as the indisputable principles of morals and pedagogy.

There is a trend in modern Soviet films to avoid a strict plot construction. Such a film is *Falling Leaves* by a young Georgian director Otar Ioseliani. But the avoidance of the traditional formal plot does not imply a lack of dramatic effect: in spite of its leisurely pace and the detailed cinematic description of the routine in a wine-bottling factory and the private life of Niko,

a young wine-maker, the story is watched with suspense and the human relationships now and then clash quite violently.

The moral development of personality makes the subject of many recently released films, which affirm active humanism and are irreconcilable to any form of deformity or perverseness.

In their investigation of man's spiritual and moral development, Soviet film makers do not only score successes but sometimes meet with regretful failures. If the fault lay only in their lack of skill or talent (of course, there are such directors)—the matter would not be worth mentioning in a general survey of the Soviet cinema. But the failures under consideration are due to an incorrect understanding of the specific historical tasks of Soviet art at the present stage of Soviet society's development.

It is well known that in many of their films Western cinematographers show the dissociation of people, daily observing their lack of mutual understanding in the drama of real life. It would be naive to assume that the social environment of the socialist artist reveals nothing but harmony in human relationships and that there is not even a hint of discreteness. A sufficiently large number of people still let their actions and mentality be influenced by selfishness, self-love, envy, careerism and a philistine belittlement of human value, which arrests the development of their social sense.

Naturally enough, all these flaws and diseases of the spirit and mind which dissociate people manifest themselves differently in a socialist society where life is based on new economic and social principles, and where a great deal has been done to eliminate this discreteness. Anyone who

has lived a long time in conditions of socialism could not fail to undergo some change. Even those people who have not yet been able to rid themselves of the old mentality display a less "finished" and implacable individualism and self-interest than do their counterparts in a capitalist society.

This being the case, is one entitled to limit oneself to the portrayal of the similarities of human failings and the dramatic situations arising therefrom with analogical moral failings and situations in a society based on private ownership? It is quite clear that if a full and realistic picture is to be produced the artist must show the differences too, for these have long been a reality and so art cannot be really true to life without their portrayal.

The analysis and exposure of these differences can be hindered not only by the artist's not paying enough attention to them but also by the style of the film. If it is elaborated on different life material (such as the study of alienation in Antonioni's films), if it is not original enough to show up the peculiarity of what is being depicted, it can deprive the artist of an understanding of the concrete aspects of life and create a curtain of mutual misunderstanding between the artist and the viewer.

The viewer's understanding of a film is affected by the laws which have governed his perception of films so far. The familiar images on the screen are understood as a cliché with a definite meaning, evoking definite associations. When the viewer sees an imitative film and his eye glides over the familiar screen constructions which illustrate failure of communication, he may not notice the divergence from the usual—the

peculiarity of phenomena engendered by socialism can be set apart only by an independent search for artistic forms which are up to the requirements of this peculiarity.

Some of our film directors, especially among the younger generation, fail to see the danger in stylistic similarity and repetition to the realism of their art. They use the idiom elaborated in the portrayal of "classical" manifestations of contemporary individualism and the ensuing lack of communication and atrophy of social sense in their attempts to show the vestiges of a past mentality in people whose character development has no precedent in history and has therefore not yet been digested by art. In the process a communist community of people where man is man's friend, comrade and brother, has been born. In spite of himself the artist narrows the field of independent research and begins to worship a manner that has not grown out of the given material and experience, and without noticing it falls prey to mannerism. Elements of this can be found, for example, in Gennady Shpalikov's *A Long and Happy Life* in which the significance of certain endlessly drawn-out scenes remains external—it is not backed by the depth and complexity of life which this apparent significance promises us. Elements of imitation and self-imitation also prevented Marlen Khutsiev's *July Rain* from coming up to the level of his earlier film or going further in the cinematic research on the theme.

The Soviet cinema is called upon to show how the problem of doing away with individualism and human isolation is solved in a socialist society and how a community of people which raises each member's responsibility for the general cause is born and how it works. Serious

research is being done in this sphere, not only in the matter of theme but also style. New artistic forms are sought where the latest discoveries in film idiom would serve the purpose of winning over the mass viewer. This research enjoys variable success. Sometimes a striving for modern idiom results in its overcomplication à la certain fashionable models. In other cases, simplicity turns into crude elementariness. But the extremes cannot rule out the accomplishments in the research which is being conducted in various directions.

In 1954, Mikhail Romm spoke out strongly in favour of a strict logic in the script. He affirmed that each action ought to be in accordance with the course of the plot and the logic of the characters. Everything that did not fit in with this logic would not be comprehensible to the viewer. A film, he insisted, had to have a solid dramaturgical basis.

A few years later, in 1961, Romm published an article entitled "Drama Today" in which he opposed "iron dramaturgical patterns" and supported a free script. He now allowed that the rifle which hangs on the wall at the beginning of the play need not necessarily go off at the end. The old conventional rules of the drama were not a law for the modern playwright. The makers of *Clear Sky*, wrote Romm, "want to make the viewer think, it is their chief aim and that is why certain episodes are dropped halfway without rounding off some of the destinies, characters and lines of the plot".³

Romm insistently underlined the influence of the new principles of plot-building on the whole structure of the film. In films based on these principles the picturesqueness of a sequence is often

eliminated, there is no fixed point of view; the camera wanders with no effort at a precisely organised composition, no even a hint of pre-meditation. "The free montage, the freely moving camera, observation of real life, and a rejection of picturesque sets have made the cinema the best means of exploring contemporary life."⁶

My aim in recalling these changes in Romm's views is not to catch him out in inconsistency. It is an example of inconsistency which is the very breath of art if it is to remain realistic. If an artist stops at some principles or methods that have caught his fancy and this stop becomes a set habit, he ceases to be a genuine artist. Art does not tolerate self-repetition and shuffling on the same spot. When art is being analysed or appraised one must always bear in mind that an essential condition for its normal development is its variety.

Romm's opinions about the dramaturgy of modern films are very interesting and convincing. Still, those opinions are not an all-binding law, they are the theory of Romm's film-directing, expressing his individual stand, his identity, the charm of his particular style of directing. But if another director tried to work "à la Romm" and stifled his own individuality he would immediately suffer a loss. To turn this or that principle or style into an absolute law is to contradict the very nature of the constant movement of realism.

The development of the style and idiom of Soviet films is sometimes represented as the following rather schematic picture: in the 30s and 40s it was the art of depicting specific historical events by means of true-to-life situations. The films made then were based on the development of a distinct plot whose logic determined the

course of the action. Nowadays, some film makers contend that a truly modern film develops in the form of the author's thought. A plot cannot shackle the action, which is the author's thought. Its place is taken by free constructions which recreate the movement of the author's thought and the stream of life. (There are no few cases in world cinema where the author's thought is not clothed in terms of an aimful exploration and wanders in a state of utter confusion. This begets the most wanton associations, arbitrary flashbacks from the present to the past and the future. Instead of reflecting objective reality the film tells us about the artist's spiritual state and little about life in general)

There is a world of difference between the battle waged by Romm and other realist artists for the emancipation of the film from the canons of strict plot patterns in order to broaden the possibilities of the cinema for a better understanding of contemporary man, and the struggle of the supporters of the "film in the form of thought" for extreme subjectivism in art.

To construct a film in the form of thought is not in itself a cause for anxiety or worry. Indeed it sometimes happens that thought embodied in screen images helps the artist to gain a fuller understanding of man's inner world in relation to the influence of the outer world of objective reality: examples of this can be found in such world-acclaimed films as Andrei Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood* and Sergei Yutkevich's *Lenin in Poland*. Obviously the crux of the matter is what aims the artist sets himself and what sort of a person he is.

The danger to art arises only when the construction of the film in the form of thought is

canonised as the most modern and is held up as a model compulsory for everyone to emulate.

In this connection it is most important to emphasise the viability of our finest traditions of the past decades. I have no intention of putting out a call: "Back to *Chapayev*!" When art develops naturally it cannot go back, even to such wonderful models. A retreat would mean ossification of tradition and that, in the final analysis, means death. But in our forward movement, in the thrill of blazing new trails, we must not forget the experience that has been accumulated. A find, or a stylistic trend should not be proclaimed the one and only truly modern technique or style, and a shadow be cast upon all the others.

It is very natural that the modern Soviet cinema should simultaneously release such films as Grigory Kozintsev's *Hamlet* and Sergei Bondarchuk's *War and Peace*, Andron Konchalovsky's *The First Teacher* with its harsh portrayal of the dramatic struggle of the warring class forces in Kirghizia in the mid-20s and Yuly Raizman's *The Communist* where the hard life of the builders of the first Soviet electric-power station is shown as if through a veil of lyrical recollections. The violent colours and tense passions in Sergei Parajanov's *The Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, the unrestrained generosity of the cameraman Sergei Urusevsky in Mikhail Kaltsozov's *The Unposted Letter*, *I Am Cuba* and *The Ambler's Run* (Urusevsky's début as a director) seem to contrast with Romm's precise and strict black-and-white constructions. Leonid Gaidai's hilarious comedy *Operation Y* and Eldar Ryazanov's psychological comedy *Car Thief* are very popular with Soviet cinema goers. Georgy Daneliya has changed to tragi-comedy in his film

Clip up! Yury Ozerov is developing the heroic epic tradition in his films about the Soviet offensive in 1919-44 in *'The Arc of Fire'* and *'The Breach'*. In his film about Stalingrad Grigory Chukhrai combines newsreels about the great battle with today's thoughts and arguments about it collected from different countries, different generations and different mentalities.

I could go on much longer listing films to illustrate the range of thematic and stylistic experiments of the Soviet cinema today but the ones I have named are enough to give a good idea of their great variety.

This diversity in style, trend, tradition and approach is due not only to the artists' different inclinations and tastes but largely to the fact that ours is a multi-national cinema.

Each of the Soviet Union's fifteen republics has its own film studios which release films in the respective language (republican studios produce about 60 per cent of all Soviet films). In these films, the development of the national traditions and the uniqueness of the national cultures are combined with those features of the country's material and spiritual life which are engendered by socialism. They are widely shown all over the Soviet Union with translations into other languages, and the best of them often represent Soviet cinematography at international film festivals.

We often say at international meetings of cinematographers that the cinema brings people and nations together. But this statement requires clarification, because the world has often seen films which on the contrary separate people by spreading racial prejudice, mutual suspicion and national discord. There are also no few films

have such a feeble impact, owing to their poor execution, that they cannot possibly promote the closeness and mutual understanding of the nations.

The so-called commercial cinema often releases films with no national distinctions whatsoever. It is of no consequence where these country-less films come from, whether from Japan, the USA, Italy or Turkey. Made to a pattern, they have no identity or personality, and more often than not they are just screen litter. But today there also exists another extreme where the national tradition is perceived as inviolable, as an adaptation to viewers' habits. The films then are nothing but an endless repetition of images and motifs, which brings the cinema nearer to the established forms of folk art or the traditional theatre.

The importance of such films for affirming the national identity of art cannot be disputed. But their artistic pattern holds a certain danger. They merely prolong the national tradition, without developing it. This leads to the petrification of national forms which prevents the creative use of contemporary discoveries and achievements of world cinema and the mutual enrichment of national cinematographies. Films which are made according to the canons of a settled tradition can only be used in the given national milieu and are often not understood by viewers speaking a different language. The cinema's great power as a means of communication between nations and nationalities is not then being properly utilised.

The question arises: how to combine national tradition and modern experiments in the cinema? What form should the modern film take if it is to enrich the national tradition with new dis-

toeries? How do national cinematographies influence each other in practice through films which make use of modern experiments of world cinema in specifically national forms?

The answer can best be sought in the best films produced in the republics' studios in the past and also in the last few years. Each one of them has its own manner of combining the specifically national and the general socialist features. And there is no contradiction between the national and the socialist content, which unites the cinemas of all the Soviet Republics. The makers of these films give a true rendering of the process of socialist development of their nations, even the national aspect does not remain invariable; the changes which take place in the life and culture of a nation affect the subject matter and the artistic forms—thus modern cinematic discoveries are combined not with frozen but with developing traditions of the national cultures.

The young Kirghiz director, Tolomush Okeyev, made a film called *The Sky of Our Childhood* in which he describes the way of life of his people with an amazing keenness of observation and sensitivity. He is a poet at heart. The sky of his childhood, the land on which he made his first steps and made his first discoveries hold an ineffable enchantment for him. But the poetry of his native land with its familiar landscapes and customs is combined in the film, in an intricate and modern manner, with the poetry of the socialist changes. When a helicopter lands in this nomadic country to take the children to school in town, the sorrow of separation is interwoven with pride in the wonder of the new life. The helicopter has come as a herald of the new but friendly world, a very useful and already neces-

sary world. There, beyond the mountains — school, offering a new view of life, the mastery of knowledge and experience which can raise the nomad people to the heights of modern socialist culture. There are people for whom teaching the nomads is not a burden but an aim and a vocation.

The camera, guided by the director's idea, peers into the distant and the near, and gives a lingering view of *yurtas*, the road and the herd. The parents are sorry to part with their children, and some can not hold back their tears. But the sadness of parting is combined with joy at what is going on, even if this joy is not as obvious as the tears: it can be felt in the children's readiness to board the helicopter, their acceptance of it as something normal, and in the whole atmosphere of the film. There are episodes and details which, without becoming symbols in the sense of abstractions, can convey much to the viewer: they carry a wealth of meaning, like poetry.

Okeyev makes free use of the methods and idioms of modern cinematography, and in his handling the discoveries of other film directors do not appear as quotations which might destroy the unity of his style. He always adds his own vision of the world to these discoveries, and they become an organic part of the poetic whole. Examples of this modern manner of developing traditions can be found in the national cinemas of all the Soviet Republics.

In Rezo Chkheidze's film *Father of a Soldier* the acting of Sergo Zakariadze, who plays the father, was applauded all over the world for his amazingly subtle and profound characterisation of the Georgian peasant. Besides traditional and national features, this old peasant embodies the

new, socialist attitude to the world which enriches his spiritual and moral make-up. He follows his son and also takes up arms in defence of his motherland.

In the cinematic portrayal of the Lokys brothers (*No One Wanted To Die*) there is no mistaking the strikingly individual manner of director Vitautas Zalakevičius. But the Lokys brothers are as typically Lithuanian as Makharashvili (*The Father of a Soldier*) is Georgian, in their appearance, behaviour, inflection of speech and way of thinking. Moreover, their characters clearly show the spiritual and moral changes which have come about in the working man under the new social system.

The modern development of national traditions can also be perceived in the Moldavian film *The Last Month of Autumn* directed by Vadim Derbenyov, in the Armenian film *The Triangle* directed by Gevork Malyan, in Uzbekfilm's *Tenderness* directed by E. Ishmukhamedov, in the Kazakh film *The Land of Our Fathers* directed by Shaken Aimanov, and in the Georgian film *White Caravan* directed by Eldar Shengelaya.

* * *

In this survey of the problems, trends and productions of the Soviet cinema I have necessarily been limited by space. I have had to omit mention of many documentary films and whole branches of cinematography (popular scientific, educational and cartoon films). And even in the analysis of feature films I have had to limit myself to the most characteristic phenomena without attempting to give a panoramic view of the Soviet cinema, which can not be done within the confines of one article.

But I hope that even this short survey and selective analysis will give readers an idea of the main trends and directions of cinematography in the Soviet Union.

The development of the cinema at any period cannot be reviewed as a "world in itself", for it only really begins to live when its object, subject and viewer interact. The art loses its impact and significance if it is divorced from its object, from reality, and becomes a variety of subjectivistic fiction. The art is dead when it is purely photographic, when it is "freed" from the passions which possess its contemporaries. Whatever its merits art remains a useless thing in itself when it has no audience or does not interact with it. In the development of the Soviet cinema we can easily trace the changes in the life of society and in the spiritual make-up of the audience.

Three years ago annual film attendance in the USSR reached the staggering figure of four thousand million people. Since then this number has been increasing by 100-150 million a year, and the rise is continuing despite the growing popularity of television (in 1968 film attendance reached the level of 4,700 million).

Soviet film makers realise very well that the growing number of viewers is not only something to be proud of but also a responsibility. They realise that the cinema should strive to satisfy the spiritual needs of their contemporaries and while providing aesthetic pleasure should speak in an intelligent and interested manner of problems that worry millions of people and give a fuller and deeper embodiment of true life in screen images.

They know that the further development of the cinema will largely depend on the explora-

tion of a wider range of themes. But, of course, the cinema's power of conviction and its influence over millions of people lies not only in the choice of theme, nor in the degree of the films' verisimilitude. An important part is played here by the language of art, by skill which implies the feeling for the truth of life organically blended with a feeling for artistic form.

Film art can develop normally only in conditions of a keen and continuous quest in every sphere, including the enrichment of existing traditions. There is no ready-made recipe for innovation and development of idiom. Every true artist goes about it in his own way, and only imitators jostle along the same tracks. The ways are many. The important thing is that they should pursue a lofty aim and lead art forward, always forward.

¹ Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 43, Russ. ed.

² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1956, p. 142.

³ Quoted from N. Zorkaya, *Portraits*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1966, p. 92.

⁴ *Film Art* No. 5, 1967.

⁵ Mikhail Romm, *Talks on the Cinema*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1964, p. 260.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

A. ANASTASYEV **Tradition and
Innovation**

The Soviet theatre, true heir to the ancient realist tradition and bold seeker after new ideas and forms in art, has entered the spiritual life of the peoples of the Soviet Union to stay.

The Soviet theatre is a complex and many-sided phenomenon. As in the theatrical culture of any land, its greatest triumphs are linked with the work of major artists. It would be inconceivable to imagine Soviet creative achievement in the theatre without Stanislavsky, Nemirovich-Danchenko, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov and Tairov, or without the outstanding theatrical artists of all the peoples of the Soviet Union. Their pupils, and their pupils' pupils, were theatre people of different generations and different artistic convictions; but they created the Soviet tradition of stage production. As in any national theatre, it is the actor who has the leading place on the Soviet stage, and the Soviet school of histrionic art is one of the summits of theatrical achievement.

In contrast, however, to the theatrical culture of most European and American countries, in which there are only a few permanent companies with a history of gradual evolution, the Soviet theatre has one special distinguishing feature—stable companies with a long course of development behind them.

All the world knows the Art Theatre which opened a new page in the history of world culture. The Maly Theatre, which has played a leading part in the spiritual development of many

generation of Russians, goes back nearly a century and a half. Over a hundred years of achievement lie behind the old Alexandrinsky Theatre in Leningrad, now the Pushkin Theatre of Drama. This tradition, handed down from the past, was not merely accepted, but was confidently reinvigorated in the Soviet theatre. Virtually every major original director created a theatre of dedicated artists. Many of them appeared shortly after the revolution and have a rich historical tradition of their own: Leningrad's Bolshoi Drama Theatre, and Moscow's Vakhtangov, Mousoviet and Mayakovskiy theatres. Then came the new companies which now occupy a conspicuous place in cultural life: the Central Soviet Army Theatre, the Satire Theatre, the Leningrad Comedy Theatre, the Central Children's Theatre, the Stanislavsky Drama Theatre, the Yermolova Theatre, and the Moscow Theatre of Drama and Comedy. The Sovremennik (Contemporary) Moscow's youngest, is now one of the most popular.

That is only Moscow and Leningrad. But what of the many Russian theatres in the other cities and towns? And of course, there are the theatres of the other nationalities in the Soviet Union. When the Soviet theatre is mentioned abroad, the term is usually taken to mean Russian theatrical culture. But the Soviet theatre speaks forty languages. The capitals of the autonomous republics have theatres with fine artistic traditions. Nearly a hundred years old, the Vainemuine Theatre in the Estonian university town of Tartu is unusual, if not unique. Its company stages drama, opera and ballet, and has become a byword throughout the Soviet Union. The comparatively small Lithuanian town of Panevezis is

for socialism, for communism, for peace. Inspired by the idea of a just social order, it gives a true account of life in its movement and dramatic complexity, speaking through the voices of talented, original, entirely diverse artists and companies who have adopted the common stand-point of socialist realism.

The Soviet theatre has been in existence for more than fifty years. But its history, its pre-history, to be exact, reaches back into the distant past. It has inherited the Russian tradition of literary and theatrical realism. What is the essence of this tradition? Perhaps it was Maxim Gorky who put it most succinctly. "Russian literature was strong in democratic feeling, in its passionate striving to solve the problems of social life, in the humanity of its message, in its songs to freedom, in its profound concern with the life of the people."¹ Such was the theatre of the past, and its crowning achievements are signed with the names of Gogol and Ostrovsky, Shchepkin and Mochalov, Yermolova and Lensky, Chekhov and Gorky, Komissarzhevskaya and Davydov, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko and outstanding progressive leaders of the theatre of the many nations which formed the Soviet Union after the October Revolution.

The October Revolution split the world into what was old and on the way out, and what was new and in process of creation. The peoples of Russia were faced with new and unknown challenges. So was the theatre. For many artists of the older generation, the transition to the new life was no easy matter. While understanding the meaning of the Revolution in the abstract and placing their sincere hopes on its liberating and humanist mission, they could not understand the

class nature of this historical upheaval. It is worth noting, however, that apart from a small group of émigrés, artists from the old theatre with its sturdy realist tradition stayed with their own people when the latter chose the way of revolution.

Since it is inherent in the art of the stage that it is unable to exist without an audience, the theatre cannot remain silent for even a moment. If it wants to survive, the theatre must open its doors every evening to admit the public to the auditorium. "The October Revolution thundered. Shows were declared open to the public free of charge...." Thus Stanislavsky linked a great social action with the everyday work of the theatre. Submitting events to close and careful scrutiny and sensing the justness of the revolutionary cause, yet by no means entirely comprehending its social legitimacy, the Art Theatre, like most other established companies with a creative tradition, carefully preserved its artistic principles and continued staging performances, but this time for a new and different audience of a kind with which they were almost or totally unfamiliar. If there was bewilderment in the face of the new challenges, there was joy at playing to an auditorium filled with workers and Red Army soldiers who, as it transpired, fully appreciated the subtlety of Chekhov's lyricism. What saved the theatre for the people and gave it the power of self-renewal were its profound inner ties with its native land, an ardent loyalty to its democratic art and, above all, the feeling that the new government understood it and was concerned for its welfare.

The plays presented up to the time of the October Revolution had been mainly classics, and

these formed the permanent repertoires of the Art, the Maly and the Alexandrinsky. The plays of Chekhov, Ostrovsky, Tolstoi, Turgenev, Shakespeare, Schiller—in a word, the best of the classics—presented the new audience with a hitherto unexplored world, expressing, as they did, humanist ideals and profoundly human feelings, and habituating people to the realm of the beautiful. This was the great, noble, and cultural mission of the old realist theatre in the first years of the Revolution.

In spite of violent civil war throughout the country, in spite of devastation and famine, the theatre, which the Communist Party had declared to be a weapon in the ideological education of the people, continued its creative work with the support of the Soviet Government. A comment by H. G. Wells, who visited Russia in 1920, is of interest. "So quite amazingly the Russian dramatic and operatic life kept on through the extremest storms of violence, and keeps on to this day. In Petersburg we found there were more than forty shows going on every night; in Moscow we found very much the same state of affairs."

There is a distinct note of astonishment in the English writer's observations. But it was not only the theatres which crossed the frontier of revolution and were active in those early October times. It is indisputable—as time will confirm—that the radically realist tradition was to define the course of Soviet theatrical art. But even then this tradition was acquiring a vigorous new lease of life. The Revolution inspired the birth of new ideological and artistic discoveries on the stage. And not only in the established theatres.

The two most active figures in the battle for the new theatre of the post-October years were

Vakhtangov and Meyerhold, artists whose influence is still so strongly felt in contemporary Soviet creative art on the stage.

It was by devious ways that Vakhtangov came to the revolutionary theatre. One of the leading spirits in Studio One of the Moscow Art Theatre, he virtually locked himself up shortly before the October Revolution in the ivory tower of studio work. In the early October days, however, Vakhtangov became a convinced protagonist and propagandist of the people's theatre and a passionate seeker after new ways. A true artist, he sensed that the Revolution heralded a new era of liberty, and his elemental democratic strivings found clarity and purpose.

It was Vakhtangov who demolished the wall which he had erected with his salon art between himself and the people. And he was not alone in doing this. It is unlikely that the great Russian poet Alexander Blok ever dreamed, on the eve of the October Revolution, that he was soon to become a powerful force in Soviet culture. This identical acceptance of the Revolution by Vakhtangov and Blok found expression in their awareness of revolutionary reality and in new aesthetic principles. Like Blok, Vakhtangov insisted that the people and the Revolution should be "listened to", and that they should be listened to "with the whole of one's creative being". Like Blok, he sensed the music of a new world.

"Open the windows. Let the fresh air in. Let life in. We mustn't fear life. We must join it."

Of those who built the Soviet theatre, Vakhtangov was the first who fully realised that the meaning and mission of revolutionary theatrical art lay only in a strong contact with the people. He affirmed the principle of a genuine

theatre of the people. What was the essence of this principle? "One must enact the turbulent spirit of the People."³ "If it has not been heard in the soul of the people, if it has not been divined in the heart of the people, then it can never be of lasting worth.... One must draw creative strength from the people. One must contemplate the people with the whole of one's creative being."⁴

Vakhtangov fought for a contemporary Soviet theatre. He dreamed of new plays in which the people who had made the Revolution would be embodied in powerful poetic imagery. In order to express the free and far-reaching inspiration of contemporary revolutionary reality, Vakhtangov sought a corresponding form of theatre. A champion of the heroic and epic stage, he demanded that a play should be a festival. A festival, because it generates energy and a thirst for action in the people. A festival, because "the heart should be filled with joy at the thought of the triumphant march of the people".⁵

Vakhtangov did not succeed in staging his heroic play. The new drama was yet to be born. But the fact remains that the plays he did produce, particularly the famous *Princess Turandot*, bear the stamp of contemporaneity, and it was in these plays that the first truly innovative signs of the Soviet theatre began to emerge. First and foremost, the artist's active involvement, his burning and vigorous striving to express his relationship with the new life, though in images often far removed from everyday reality, which led to that insistent demand so typical of Vakhtangov, "What for?" Hence his call for "theatricality", because the new world must be announced loudly and with joy.

Vakhtangov died five years after the Revolution, with his monumental image of a living contemporary of the Revolution still an unfulfilled dream. But he had "listened" to the people and heard in their souls the music of free creativeness.

Meyerhold burst into the new theatrical life in quite a different way and with more assurance. A director of the old imperial Alexandrinsky Theatre, he immediately met the new régime halfway and joined the Communist Party. Somewhat later, on his release from White Guards' imprisonment, he came to Moscow and was soon at the centre of the city's stormy theatrical life.

Lunacharsky, who knew Meyerhold intimately, has explained his sudden swing in favour of the Revolution: "There are people exceptionally sensitive to their environment whose convictions seem fluid and whose theories seem to change, not in a series of consecutive logical stages, but with an apparently unpredictable suddenness. But this changeability is a symptom of their changing environment.

"If these changeable temperaments are passive, we have before us what is no more than the phenomenon of adaptability; but if they are active, then this sensitive reliance on environment performs a new kind of function, so that those who possess them become mouthpieces and sometimes (as in this case) confederates of the corresponding force in the changing environment.

"In more or less normal times, when society is not subject to sudden upheavals, it is comparatively easy to follow the 'fashions', and resisting them is a comparatively painless experience. But

revolution is a shattering upheaval, and when it happens, the collapse of everything rotten is an agonising process. Adaptation demands the sort of temperament and resourcefulness that are only within the powers of the exceptionally gifted."⁶

This observation does much to explain how many leading artists such as K. Marjanishvili and L. Kurbas became closer to the Revolution. Revolution was close to Meyerhold's heart also because he saw in it the stormy and final collapse of everything that was old, including the old art. He had already long protested against the pettiness he loathed so much, the earthbound naturalism, the bourgeois limitations of taste. In rejecting these, Meyerhold sometimes went too far and threatened the integrity of the actor on the stage; but his protests against philistinism in art, against slavish imitation and against pseudo-realism were indisputably progressive in significance. In his sometimes stormily emotional, sometimes coldly rational searchings, the audience could hear the echoes of revolution, the call to arms. And they could see the foe smitten by blow after satirical blow.

Two of Meyerhold's productions in the early Soviet period demonstrate with particular clarity his strength and weakness as a major artist of the Soviet theatre who had subordinated his art to politics and revolution. They were E. Verhaeren's *Les Aubes* (1920) and, above all, V. Mayakovsky's *Mystery Bouffe* (1921).

In spite of its complicated stage presentation, *Mystery Bouffe* had a tremendous impact on the audiences of that time. It came as a powerfully imagined expression of revolution triumphant. It is highly significant that the *Mystery* intro-

duces to the stage what are, in fact, new heroes, even though they resemble one another in the mass. The "Unclean" are depicted with the sharpened pen of the stage poster, they are the progenitors of the contemporary heroes of the Soviet theatre.

Meyerhold did more than found a theatre of his own which was subsequently to become famous all over the world. His name is linked with an entire new trend in theatrical presentation—that of agitation and political publicism which was to develop enormously in scope. Its forms and aspects were very varied. Tremendous productions in the open squares with a cast of thousands playing to tens of thousands. Short plays, or "agit-sketches" as they were called, in which the urgent topics of the day were "personalised" vividly and very much to the point. These cameos were particularly widespread in front-line, workers', peasants', and, most of all, amateur theatres.

This theatre was reminiscent of a political meeting. It spoke in the loud voice of the orator and unashamedly resorted to the devices of the heroic and satirical poster with no respect for half-shades. Alongside the stark, clearly defined slogans of the day and the generalised poster-style images of the two antagonistic classes, the stage was dominated by huge cosmic symbols expressing the world-wide significance of the October Revolution; for, in the minds of the people, October was the beginning of a transformation of life all over the planet.

In times of revolution, when the old life is being rocked to its very foundations, people might hardly be expected to have time for art. But the experience of all great revolutions testi-

fies that it is during these crucial stages of history that art, and the art of the theatre in particular, is not only subjected to profound internal stresses, but bursts with shattering force into the world of everyday reality.

So it was in Soviet Russia in the early October years. There is no mystery in the fact that the general mass of the people, who hitherto knew nothing about the theatre, were passionately, elementally and enthusiastically drawn to this most public and most active of the arts. In the theatre, people were united in their emotions, and in this unity their revolutionary fervour found expression. A feeling of the collective, of strength in the collective, had been revealed to the people for the first time by the realities of the Revolution, and it was given a new lease of life in the art of the theatre.

There can be no question about the revolutionary content of agitational theatre or the effectiveness of its role in the spiritual arming of the people. During that period, more than a few artistic discoveries were made by highly talented innovators. Yet the early revolutionary theatre was a complex phenomenon. Revolutionaries in art, as Stanislavsky put it, are in too much of a hurry. Refusing to come to terms with the old art, they interpret all that is traditional as an obstacle to the new, and so they attack the old theatre and seek to think up new, surprising, sometimes fruitful and sometimes hopelessly futile forms. And so there were extremes, including the formalist ones. There were blunders. There were attempts to cope with the new challenges by applying the forms and manners of decadent art. But for the artists who sincerely accepted the October Revolution, there were

attempts to answer the question, how was the Revolution to come to theatre, and how was the theatre to place itself at the service of the Revolution? That is why the Communist Party, while safeguarding the realist tradition of the past and attacking formalism and aestheticism, solicitously and patiently nursed the impetuous, urgent first shoots of the new art.

Broad public education, said Lenin, should be the seed-bed for "a really new, great, communist art... which will create a form in correspondence with its content"?

The powerful impact of the Revolution was felt by artists with different creative tenets. Sooner or later, and with varying degrees of success, they tried to grasp what had happened in the country and in the world at large, and through their art they sought to express their reaction to the great transformation.

The Moscow Kamerny Theatre and its director, Alexander Tairov, won an important place in Soviet art. He too arrived at revolutionary art indirectly. An aesthete and a knight of the theatre who had once asserted that "the true content of stage art is in the actor's mastery of his craft", Tairov seemed virtually oblivious to the fact that the first socialist revolution in the world had taken place in Russia, so far removed at first was the repertoire of the Kamerny Theatre from contemporary reality. But he too was to feel the impact of the new life, and his creative activity, single-mindedness and indomitable thought were in tune with the time of *Sturm und Drang*. Perhaps this was seen with especial clarity in his production of Racine's *Phèdre* (1921), which was received in the West, and especially in France, as a revelation, as an act

of revolution in art. When the Kamerny Theatre toured Europe and North and South America in 1923, foreign critics wrote of this theatre that it had "grown up with Soviet power on the soil prepared by the liberation of humanity", and, after the departure of the Kamerny Theatre, that "we shall often turn in our thoughts to Russia, for we know henceforth that the light on the European scene comes from the East".⁸

One of the most widespread theatrical concepts of the twenties was the idea of unity with the Revolution. The first sure step towards the new life was an effort by the theatre—including companies of the old, established tradition—to answer, however indirectly, the call of the Revolution.

On the first anniversary of the October Revolution, the Maly Theatre presented A. K. Tolstoi's heroic tragedy *Posadnik*. This old play was, of course, far removed from the events towards the end of 1918, but Lunacharsky testifies that it "produced, with Yuzhin in the title role, a tremendous revolutionary impression on the mass of the workers and the Red Army men".⁹

Also significant in the quest for harmony with the new epoch was an experiment by the Art Theatre, perhaps the most cautious and dilatory amongst its academic brethren. The first new production in the Art Theatre after October was Byron's mystery play *Cain*. It was a flop; but Stanislavsky's motives for choosing the play for production in 1920 are noteworthy. "In conformity with the times we are living through, this should be a play of great inner and social content."¹⁰

Some time was to elapse before the old traditional theatres could produce plays which were truly revolutionary in content. But in the years immediately following October, productions appeared which were in harmony with the Revolution in the exact sense of the word.

In the most difficult period for the Republic, in 1919, when Petrograd was in danger, that city was also the scene of the foundation of a new Bol'shoi Dramatic Theatre with a traditional classical repertory which inspired the new audiences with an elated fighting mood, with pride in achievement, with active heroism. In his celebrated article "The Intelligentsia and the Revolution", Alexander Blok, one of the theatre's founders, said: "The only meaning of life is to make immoderate demands of life, all or nothing; to expect the unexpected; to believe not in what is on this earth, but what ought to be, even though it does not now exist. But life yields it to us, for life is beautiful." This romantic declamation reveals to us Blok's own theatrical aspirations. With Maxim Gorky, who was also behind the foundation of the Bol'shoi Dramatic Theatre, Blok wanted to hear a powerful affirmation of life, its beauty and its heroism. This was achieved in the theatre's début, Schiller's *Don Carlos*, which in A. Lavrent'ev's production has gone down in the history of the Soviet theatre as one of the peak achievements of heroic and romantic art.

La Fuente Ojijuna by Lope de Vega, produced by K. Marjanov in Kiev on May 1st in the same year of 1919, made an even deeper impression on the minds of contemporaries and on the history of the theatre. This Spanish drama appeared on the stage in Kiev unexpectedly, as

if from real revolutionary life, in a city which was itself at the front line. The vivid theatrical form of this play was blended with democratic ideas and revolutionary fervour, the aesthetic sophistication with propagandist fire. Marjanov, the producer, summed up the "riddle" of the play and its impact on the audience in a few telling words. Of the finale, when the leading characters come forward on stage, he said, "I want it so that when the actors come down to the footlights, the spectators go marching off to the front."¹¹

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW WAY OF LIFE

Such was the first day in the life of the Soviet theatre, its early period, which has with justification been called the time of *Sturm und Drang*, so vigorously and romantically did it affirm on stage the victory of the Revolution and so furiously did it overthrow the old world. Revolution made its stage entrance wearing the mask of the propaganda-poster, the cosmic images of *Mystery Bouffe*, as the mass spectacle with a cast of thousands, in the romantic idiom of the majority of plays.

When the Civil War was over, however, and the soldiers returned home from the front, and when a difficult new period of peaceful, creative life began, art inevitably underwent substantial changes. The people, looking back on the recent past, thought with concern of the present and the future, trying hard to understand the new way of life. Life peremptorily demanded that a new man should appear on the stage, a hero of the time who would detach himself from the crowd and reveal his inner self to the people.

This challenge could naturally be met only by a new drama, and the new drama was soon forthcoming. Dramatic literature acquired distinguished new prose playwrights such as K. Trenyov, V. Ivanov, B. Lavrenyov, L. Leonov, L. Seifullina, M. Bulgakov, while writers who made their literary débüt in the theatre included V. Bill-Belotserkovsky, B. Romashov, M. Kulish, K. Yashen, S. Saifulin, J. Jabarly, B. Erdman and, later, V. Kirshon, I. Mikitenko, A. Afionogenov, V. Vishnevsky and N. Pogodin. Their plays were the first to record the Revolution and the life of the young Soviet Republic in realistic images. Even then the variety of genre in Soviet playwriting had become much evidence. There were tragedies, plays of everyday life, psychological dramas, historical plays, and satire. Examples are *Uirineya* by L. Seifullina and V. Pravdukhin, *Storm* by V. Bill-Belotserkovsky, *Red Falcons* by S. Saifulin, *97* by M. Kulish, *Sevil* by J. Jabarly, and others.

A complex and substantial process was at work in the art of the stage at that time. Life and its new challenges demanded a more profoundly realistic art, a theatre capable of revealing the fate of people in the Revolution. The radical problem of Soviet theatre in the mid-twenties was Man and the Revolution. And it was at this point that the realistic tradition of the Russian theatre and the romantic and publicistic theatre of the immediate post-October years joined not only in controversy, but in mutual enrichment as well.

It must not, of course, be thought that Soviet playwriting and the Soviet theatre simply accepted the former tradition as static and immutable. The very essence of the artistic

process was that the realism of the previous age combined with the new life to be enriched by hitherto undreamt-of features. The dramatist discovered a new hero who was not only inspired with the ideal of the communist transformation of society, but who knew how to attain this society.

In 1925, in mid-decade, a play appeared in which the two principles of Soviet creative theatre were clearly seen to have merged. This was Y. Lyubimov-Lanskoi's production of *Storm* by Bill-Belotserkovsky. Directly propagandist in function, it nevertheless held up a mirror to the audience so that they saw themselves and their own lives of the not-so-distant past in a series of convincing everyday pictures and human portraits.

Storm was presented on the stage of the Moscow Trade Union Theatre, a young theatre which had set itself the task of catering artistically for the working-class public. But what is really important here is that the new heroes had now stepped on to the stage of the old traditional theatres and were revealed in all their complex living substance. The most important manifestations of this new trend were to be K. Trenyov's *Lyubov Yarovaya* at the Maly Theatre in 1926, and V. Ivanov's *Armoured Train 14-69* at the Art Theatre in 1927.

The theatre expresses the age and affects the souls of the public in different ways, turning to the past and the present in true-to-life pictures and in the conventional atmosphere of the stage. But the most capable and undeniable personification of the times on the stage is the hero—a man who incorporates the actions, feelings, excitements and problems of contemporary reality. A

new hero, a new living type in art, is always a revelation, and the characters in *Lyubov Yarovaya* and *Armoured Train 14-69* were just such a revelation.

One may imagine how difficult it was for the actors at the Maly and Art theatres to master the characterisation of people of a kind they had never met on the stage before and probably not in real life either. The artists were saved by their own intuition, by their inner aspirations to become part of the new life and by their ability to see what was most important in the phenomena of reality. Significant for that time is a comment by the Russian actor Vasily Kachalov who played the partisan Vershinin in *Armoured Train 14-69*. "Some critics," he said, "were dissatisfied with me. They wanted me to take a romantic line and portray a leader. But what is wrong about Vershinin coming to the Revolution out of personal conviction instead of books? He's not an intellectual, he's a peasant, a hard headed peasant."

The standpoint of the actor realist is clearly identifiable in this comment by an artist. And this was the source of the artistic discoveries made by Kachalov, Khmeliov, Batalov, Pashennikov and Sadovsky, the people who made the Revolution, who were swept up by the force of the wind who were changed by its influence first came on to the stage as the living heroes of a dramatic action who were endowed with their own distinctive personal qualities.

The best plays about the Revolution on the multi-national Soviet stage contained a clearly expressed ideological tendency they affirmed a new world based on man's freedom from enslavement and pronounced sentence of death on the

capitalist system of life. But if in the theories of the "Left" this tendency had been stated in stark, direct terms, it was now contained in complete human destinies. The Soviet theatre at this new stage of its artistic evolution confirmed the law of realism: the typical was expressed in the concrete and the individual.

Plays in the twenties about the Revolution were not seen as past history by the audience. The interval of time between the events and their representation was too short. What mattered was that they echoed contemporary social problems. For all their difference in content, the dramas of Verzhin, Lyubov Yarovaya, and the Turbins (from Mikhail Bulgakov's play) evoked a live response, for they provided the answer to many burning questions of the day. The social significance of *Days of the Turbins* for the audience and for the theatre was summed up later by the distinguished Soviet critic P. Markov in the following terms:

"When Bulgakov was staged at the Art Theatre, he brought with him a sharp and lively sense of the present.... The action of *Days of the Turbins* unfolded against an officers' background; but the destinies of these officers and the destiny of the Turbin family involved issues which were crucial for the Russian intelligentsia. *Days of the Turbins* was the Art Theatre's first answer to its own question—Where is the Russian intelligentsia to go, and with whom? And the theatre spoke its mind with all the excitement and with all the sincerity of which it was capable."¹²

But the theatre is the theatre. It cannot survive without a hero of the times, a contemporary in the literal sense of the word. Especially

during transitional periods in history. And the end of the twenties was such a period of transition. A new man was coming into being, a new socialist psychology and a new morality.

One of the earliest plays to feature the new people was A. Afinogenov's *The Crank* at the Second Moscow Art Theatre, as Studio One of the Moscow Art Academic Theatre came to be called after 1925. This theatre, which had long stood apart from contemporaneity, suddenly brought into the open one of the most difficult issues for art at that time.

The Crank, produced by Ivan Bersenev in 1929, was a social and cultural event. And understandably so. The spirit of the time, the wave of enthusiasm so intense at the beginning of socialist construction, and, above all, the new, vital and eager hero (the enthusiast Boris Volchin was played by Azary Ararin)—all this came as a revelation. For the first time, the stage saw a simple, very ordinary man who was firmly convinced of the truth of socialism. Not only in building works and factories, but in the moral beauty of the new society. His thoughts on friendship, on decency, on one's duty to one's spiritual aspirations rang forth on the stage with conviction and with faith, and it was this that gave the play its drawing power and its freshness.

It is not easy to distinguish what is fresh in life, especially in the inner life of a contemporary. It is even more difficult to catch that freshness in art. At the turn of the decade between the twenties and the thirties, when socialism was becoming a reality, the Soviet theatre successfully coped with a complex challenge. It is possible, merely by considering the themes of

the socialist development of the Soviet Union, to realise why playwright Nikolai Pogodin turned his attention to the factories and building sites. He wanted to see for himself, to get the feeling of the new working man in his natural surroundings. That is how *Tempo, Poem of an Axe* and *My Friend* came into being.

The Moscow Theatre of the Revolution set off boldly into unexplored territory. The director, Alexei Popov, the cast and the writer went to the Urals, where the action of *Poem of an Axe* took place. This was no ordinary study of "real life". The artists were confronted with characters who had never appeared on the stage before, and they had to become familiar with their life and work and understand what there was of drama in the life of an ordinary steel-smelter, and why a poem could be written to an axe. Artists Dmitri Orlov and Maria Babanova did not merely create credible images of working people, they translated them into movement at those rare moments when the elements of new character were coming to life in a man, when the young lad who could barely read or write was inspired by the spark of enthusiasm for work.

In the thirties, the new heroes, the people who were actively transforming life on socialist principles, confidently made their entrance on the stage. They were of the people, and they personified the characteristics of those whom the Revolution had drawn into historic creative work.

In its best and most typical productions, the Soviet theatre is profoundly alien to commercialism and does not welcome narrowly understood and trivial topicality. Its strength is in

developing side by side with reality and recording in artistic images the essential spiritual processes in the development of Soviet society. Two plays are highly characteristic in this sense. A. Alinogenov's *Fear*, performed in 1930 at the Moscow Art Theatre and at the Leningrad Drama Theatre, and A. Korneichuk's *Platon Korchet* on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre in 1935.

Fear was one of the first plays in which the new breed of Soviet intelligentsia appeared on the stage. Among them, Yelena, played by Alla Tarasova, taking her first timid and independent steps in science, but sure of her own strength and sometimes bluntly outspoken. Her role and place in the bitter ideological struggle can be defined not in terms of scientific authority but by her class standpoint and her ability to understand what helps Soviet power and what is hostile to it. This was a historically important moment in the spiritual life of the people and in the development of Soviet culture and Soviet science. It was the rise of the new proletarian intelligentsia.

Less than five years later, the surgeon Platon Korchet made his stage entrance. The part was played by Boris Dubronravov, and this was a new, quite different type of Soviet intellectual—a man of great learning, with a profound understanding of the humanist mission of Soviet science, a man whose strength can above all be measured in terms of ideals, drive, and creative scientific authority.

The Soviet theatre has more than once been called the artistic chronicle of the life of a socialist country. Perhaps this definition is excessive. But there can be no question that the more

essential phenomena were indeed reflected on the stage, particularly in the images of the characters as representative of a new social type of man. This was the situation when socialist realism began to emerge, and the Soviet theatre was to take this path and proceed further.

We have been discussing certain of the most conspicuous signs of innovation in the making in Soviet theatrical art without reference to the variety of new art forms on the multi-national stage. Meanwhile, the process of renewing and enriching form was inseparable from that of mastering the new content and also from the mutual influence exerted on each other by the various theatres.

Realism, the truthful and profound representation of life's inner spiritual processes, has always been firmly and unequivocally supported by the Communist Party in theory and in practice. Even in the early days of the Revolution, the Soviet authorities undertook to safeguard the cultural heritage of the past as preserved by the theatres, museums and libraries. By passing a whole series of official measures, by publishing mass editions of the classics realists and erecting memorials to the great men and women of history, the classics realists among them, the Government stressed that it was the realist tradition that was held most dear by the Soviet people. The first to be awarded the title of People's Artist of the Republic was Maria Yermolova. When the Art Theatre was touring Europe and America (1922-24) and was being subjected to attacks by certain "Left" elements in the theatre world, a special government Act recognised the twenty-fifth year of its existence.

From the very first years after October, the

Communist Party consistently discouraged all departures from an objective trueness to life, opposing all forms of decadent or formalistic art and ideologically alien influences. This refusal to compromise was entirely justified.

The development of art is a complex process. It is particularly complex when a new method is beginning to emerge. That is why any kind of enforced monopoly in creative art is inadmissible, and that is why in 1925, in a resolution concerning policy in creative writing, the Party stressed that while acknowledging unmistakable class and social content of trends in literature, it "could in no way bind itself in allegiance to any one direction in the field of literary form".¹³

The Party's correct and far-seeing policy not only preserved the old realistic theatre without stifling the first shoots of the new one, but also helped separate what was of value from what was worthless in an atmosphere of lively creative competition.

It is important to bear in mind that during the process of ideological and creative conflict, during the process of creative competition, the vastly differing trends developing within the framework of art seen as the servant of socialist ideals, did not merely clash, but exerted mutual influence on each other as well.

Even in the variegated theatrical life the most talented and far-seeing artists of the old theatre were able to distinguish the elusive beginnings of what was healthy and new. At the beginning of the century, Stanislavsky, firmly rejecting formalism in all its manifestations and realising that a great deal of what passed for innovation in the contemporary theatre was in actual fact a repetition of what had already been done before,

welcomed and encouraged the search for new ideas in the use of the stage set and in the technical side of the actor's craft. While affirming that "eternal art is the highway and fashion a byway", the great director nevertheless held that "fashion glitters, it turns the head of the young; but it soon passes, and all that is left of those fashionable discoveries and pursuits is a small but precious crystal which drops into the urn of eternal art".¹¹

Exacting and critical in their estimates of theatrical innovation, the leading artists of the old Russian theatre made no attempt to canonise the art of their own famous theatres. They could see from previous experience that the unshakeable traditions of realism had become choked with something obstructive to the further development of the theatre. Highly indicative of this is an admission by V. Nemirovich-Danchenko. After the première of *Princess Turandot* at Vakhtangov's studio, he wrote: "The man who created this production knows how much of what is old must be cut out and how much is permanent. And he knows how to set about it In some ways, this artist will reject the illusion of innovation, yet in other ways he will give us old ones quite a shock; but right now it's 'painsful and sweet' for us, and nice, and weird."¹²

When Vakhtangov died, Nemirovich-Danchenko said: "Vakhtangov made no attempt in his creative work to break free of the Art Theatre, but he did break away from the bad traditions of the Art Theatre. What traditions! The naturalism from which the Art Theatre itself is anxious to free itself.... Vakhtangov broke away from this grey, dreary naturalism with a sort of elemental impetuosity...."¹³

There were many productions in realist theatres where the quest for new forms was an obsession, and directors hostile to any form of imitation were prevented from working as they were accustomed by this atmosphere of pursuit and discovery.

Gorky's *The Enemies*, produced in 1935 at the Moscow Art Theatre, is a classic drama of socialist realism and sprang from the theatre's grasp of socialist ideology, from the seed of profound understanding of the human spirit sown in the soil of art by the still young Art Theatre. Of *The Enemies* it can be said that everything on the stage is as in life. But that is not all. Explored to the very depths of the human psyche, the characters expressed tremendous social and historical generalisations and communicated a clear social and political message.

It is not so easy to define the contrary influence. Detractors tend to be stubborn, and for a long time they were sincerely convinced that the future lay with them alone. Life, however, soon proved that Meyerhold, Tairov, Kurbas, Akhmeteli and certain other directors were getting the most significant results precisely where their natural innovative flair as directors merged with the profound and noble truth of the actor's art.

In this respect, three plays produced in 1933 are indicative: *The Optimistic Tragedy* by V. Vishnevsky at the Kamerny Theatre, Y. German's *The Prelude* at the Meyerhold Theatre, and A. Korneichuk's *The Death of the Squadron* at the Ukrainian Berezil Theatre in Kharkov.

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the director, A. Tairov, wider and more politically oriented thinking than any of his previous productions. The idea of revolution permeates the whole play, determining its style and composition, its atmosphere, and the art of the actors. In order to express this idea, Tairov did not have to repudiate his own finds and discoveries in art. On the contrary. He had always striven for an art that would be symbolically monumental, had always been drawn to broad poetic generalisations, and he had blazed new artistic trails which branched off from the mirroring of life in the particularised forms of life itself. These new trails, especially when the director was under the influence of decadent literature, frequently led Tairov up the blind alleys of "pure" art. But when he came into contact with a playwright who was close to him in spirit and style, the result was the birth of the innovative production in Soviet romantic art. Of course, the most valuable finds and discoveries of the earlier Tairov found expression in his work as director on Vishnevsky's play, but what he had discovered earlier acquired a fundamentally new quality. To put it more precisely, *The Optimistic Tragedy* is a landmark in our theatre's history just because this production formed and demonstrated most fully and most vividly the Soviet romantic tradition in theatrical art.

It would be wrong to trace the genealogy of *The Optimistic Tragedy* solely to Tairov's earlier production of *Phèdre* and *Adrienne Lecourteur*. It is clear that Tairov's artistic discovery was inspired by the new life, by the idea of revolution, which corresponds in scale to romantic monumentality of imagery. It is also clear that *The Optimistic Tragedy* incorporated much that

had been discovered by the early revolutionary Soviet theatre. It is significant that Vishnevsky should have found Mayakovsky nearest to him as a playwright, and Tairov, for all the controversy between him and Meyerhold, borrowed heavily from the latter's artistic arsenal. In *The Optimistic Tragedy*, Tairov was seen at his shining best. But what finally matters is that the magnificent farewell ball with its vividly contrasted colours and moods, the monumental finale evocative of a solemn requiem, and many other impressive moments in the Kamerny Theatre production, were brought to life by the psychologically concrete human figures created by Koonen, Zharov, and Novlyansky.

In Meyerhold's production of *The Prelude* staged in the same year, the director's flair for innovation came vividly and fully to the fore. Meyerhold's art was not burdened by formal impositions or sacrificed to the temporary distractions of the rational theories characteristic of many productions in the twenties. Meyerhold's true worth as a genuine innovator and seeker lay in his incomparable ability to find plastic expression for an idea, in his turbulent energy and his sculptural mastery of the stage, in his incredibly powerful sense of artistic hyperbole stretched to the very brink of the credible, in his bold and inevitable use of music and lighting in the theatre, and in his dynamism of movement and thought. All these elements fused with the rich psychological interpretations of the actors into an alloy of great strength.

The important idea of man's tragedy in modern capitalist society brought vigorous and dynamic new forms into being. Seeking for the truth of human feeling, without which there can be no

art of theatre, the director and actors turned to actual experience and to the realist tradition. In Meyerhold's work at its highest, his bold fantasy and his attention to external form, so far from rocking the foundations of the realist tradition in Russian theatre, renewed that tradition and enriched it. Perhaps this will help to account for the significant fact that Meyerhold in his declining years again worked in collaboration with Stanislavsky.

A. Korneichuk had written a revolutionary tragedy, and it is understandable that it should have found a living response in the Ukrainian theatre which was disposed in favour of conventional romantic imagery and whose creative history was distinguished for high political feeling. *The Death of the Squadron* was produced by B. Tyagno. The idea of putting on the play, however, and the shape of the future production must be attributed to the outstanding Ukrainian director Les Kurbas. It is important to bear this in mind, since, in *The Death of the Squadron*, the largely experimental Berezil Theatre by staging a play which was close to it in idea and style virtually summed up its complex and contradictory searchings and asserted what was strongest in all it had accumulated over the previous years.

The main course in the development of new forms in the socialist realist theatre may be defined as the augmentation of the director's artistic stock-in-trade and that of the theatre as a whole and the quest for vigorous and active means of expression on the solid foundations of the actor's art.

For all their significance, the plays we have just been discussing cannot, of course, be taken

as entirely characteristic of the Soviet theatre in the thirties. They have been singled out because they clearly demonstrated certain essential ideological and creative tendencies in the development of Soviet stage art. As for the overall picture of the Soviet theatre in those years, there were dozens of outstanding productions in the various national languages, and there was a huge gallery of playwrights, directors, and actors. It is a temptation to study the map of Soviet theatre in detail, but this is not feasible, and so in the ensuing stages of its history we shall merely draw the reader's attention to certain phenomena, few in number, but of undoubted significance.

THE CLASSICS ON STAGE

The early and middle thirties saw the first maturing of socialist realist method in Soviet stage art. A decisive sign of the times is the fact that the conscious and active assertion of socialist ideals had been adopted by theatres of vastly differing ages and aesthetic programmes. Companies of the established realist tradition had reached a level in their ideological and creative evolution at which the new reality had become a solid foundation for their creative art. The early revolutionary theatres, once they had recovered from the "Left-wing infantile disorder", closely scrutinised the spiritual processes of life and enriched the stage art of socialist realism with their high standards of achievement.

Maxim Gorky's outstanding contribution to the emergence and formation of the literature of socialist realism is well known. No less

important was his influence on the development of the Soviet theatre.

Gorky's *Yegor Bulychev and Others* at the Vakhtangov Theatre has a special place in the life of the Soviet theatre. Written in 1932, this play is a natural stage in the development by Gorky of his theme of the disintegration of the old world. It features, as do certain of the writer's novels, the image of the merchant in revolt—the powerful and original personality who realises that he has lived his life "on the wrong side of the fence". As distinct from such works as, say, *Foma Gordeyev*, the writer, fortified with the historical experience of the Revolution and of socialist construction, has not only demonstrated the inevitable collapse of the old world but has opened the door into the future as well.

The production of Gorky's play demonstrated the innovative characteristics of Soviet direction (B. Zakhava) and of the actor's art. The part of Bulychev was played by the remarkable Boris Shchukin. The production revealed a strong blend of socialist philosophy's realistic representation of life in historical flux with the sharply expressed individuality of the artist. The performances by Shchukin and the other members of the cast clearly demonstrated Vakhtangov's contribution to the Soviet theatre: truth of human feeling, sharpened by scenic hyperbole, the unequivocal expression of the artist's social standpoint, and a profound grasp of the hero's inner world. *Yegor Bulychev* was the answer to a vital problem—how to depict on stage a man in such a way that his ideals and inclinations were not openly stated, but emerged naturally from the convincing and untrammelled representation of his life.

Gorky's last plays, *Yegor Bulychev and Others*, *Dostigayev and Others*, and the second version of *Vassa Zheleznova*, all performed in the thirties, were charged with profound contemporary meaning. No writer in the period of socialist construction revealed with such power the collapse of the old world, overthrown by the proletarian revolution.

Yegor Bulychev at the Vakhtangov Theatre was more than a creative triumph for the cast. It was the artistic expression of the principles of socialist realism. It is not surprising that a great many companies took up Gorky's play. In 1933, *Yegor Bulychev* was performed in 245 professional theatres, and it is noteworthy that it has entered the repertoire of theatres in the national republics.

The importance of Gorky's plays in the national theatres of the USSR in the thirties can be seen from the production of *Yegor Bulychev and Others* at the Sundukyan Theatre in Armenia (1933). As was pointed out by Vagarsh Vagarshyan, the outstanding actor who played Bulychev, this production was a particularly fruitful example of the interaction of Russian and Armenian theatrical art.

As a builder of the Soviet theatre, Gorky ranks with the classics of Russian and world literature, and his plays demonstrate with particular vividness the link between Soviet art and the classical tradition.

By the middle of the thirties, the Soviet theatre was establishing new relations with the classical tradition. That this tradition should have acquired a contemporary significance was not the result of any rude tempering with the play on the director's part, or of any vulgarly sociological

interpretation of the imagery (a not uncommon feature of the early stage), but of a sense of profound inner ties with the ideas and moral criteria of the great works of the past.

Shakespeare held a particularly important place in the literature of that time. The best productions—*Romeo and Juliet* at the Revolution Theatre, *Othello* at the Maly and at the Georgian Rustaveli Theatre, *King Lear* at the Jewish Theatre, *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Soviet Army Theatre, *Hamlet* at the Sundukyan Theatre (Armenia) and others, all enhanced the reputation of Soviet theatres with their profound interpretations of the works of the great English dramatist.

The Russian theatre had a rich tradition of Shakespeare production and, of course, the interpretations of Mochalov, Yermolova, Lenitsky, Adamyan and Papazyan had left their stamp on the work of Soviet artists. But Shakespeare was discovered anew during three or four seasons in the thirties. This can be explained by the fact that the tragedies and comedies of the great dramatist, with their powerful passions, their heroic overtones, their penetration into the depths of the human psyche, and their historical optimism, happened to reflect the turbulent and highly charged spiritual life of the people who were actively engaged in building the new world.

Alexander Ostuzhev's *Othello* at the Maly Theatre thrilled the audiences of that time and caught them on the raw, because in him they could see the personification of human nobility and moral perfectionism and because the tragedy of the Moor's isolation in an alien world and his and Desdemona's loss of the world harmony

were seen by a society founded on collectivism as a human tragedy of the highest order. The artist's image fused together the majestic nobility and the powerful temperament constantly held in check, the stern courage of the warrior and the warmth of the human being.

Ostuzhev's *Othello* was inspiringly romantic and yet full of profound psychological truth. And so an outstanding actor was able to solve in his art the problem of interpreting the romantic and the realistic in the new creative method of Soviet art.

Ostuzhev might be thought to have fixed and canonised *Othello*'s image on the stage for a long time to come. But soon afterwards, in 1937, the Moor was played by Akaki Khorava at the Rustaveli Theatre, and the Georgian artist's triumph demonstrated in all its power the variety of the socialist multi-national theatre. The new *Othello* bore no resemblance to Ostuzhev's. It was the full expression of Khorava's national art-form in speech, movement, and thought. In what was most essential, however, the two actors were close to each other. Both of them finally overthrew the rather persistent tradition of accentuating *Othello*'s barbaric origins, which come to the surface at moments of tragic crisis. Like Ostuzhev, Khorava adopted a firmly humanist and human standpoint. "*Othello*," he said, "is a tragedy imbued with great love for man. Its secret is a dream of man as strong and many-sided."

King Lear, with Solomon Mikhoels in the leading role, was the most significant production at the Jewish Theatre in those years. Lear-the-wise, Lear-the-philosopher—that is how the actor interpreted his hero. And it is noteworthy that

generalisation verging on symbol was wedded to complete realism. As Mikhoels played him, the legendary king was an epic figure and a quite ordinary human being at one and the same time. It is important to stress this, since it reveals yet one more facet of the rich, philosophical and essentially true-to-life popular art affirmed by the Soviet theatre.

The classical repertoire of the Soviet theatre in the mid-thirties was not limited to Shakespeare. The end of the decade was notable for the appearance of outstanding artistic productions which have become part of theatrical history: Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* at the Art Theatre, I. Franko's *Stolen Happiness* at the Ukrainian Theatre, now renamed after the writer, and *Madame Bovary* adapted from Flaubert at the Moscow Kamerny Theatre. These productions testify to a new stage in the life of the classics in the theatre, and they reveal with particular force the ideological maturity and artistic depth in the Soviet multi-national theatre's approach to the classics.

Chekhov's name is linked with the birth of the Art Theatre. *The Three Sisters*, staged in 1901, was one of its best productions. But that was forty years ago, and it was impossible simply to go on reproducing the original version. The Soviet theatre's senior director, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, one of the directors of the original production, staged *The Three Sisters* afresh, and this version proved relevant in the years of the socialist construction of society. In the sufferings and unfulfilled dreams of Chekhov's characters, the audience felt the striving for a free, happy, brighter life, and became painfully and acutely aware of how meanness, spiritual

barrenness and selfishness could be inimical to the new moral standards of the working life.

For the Ukrainian theatre and its actors, *Stolen Happiness*, directed by G. Yura, was the frontier where realism, enriched by a philosophical interpretation of life, reached the dimensions of high symbol. "Step by step I tried to tell the Soviet spectator the tragic story of a whole nation robbed of its happiness," wrote Amvrosy Buchma,¹⁷ the famous Ukrainian actor who played Mikola Zadorozhny.

In *Madame Bovary*, Alexander Tairov and Alisa Koonen highlighted the tragic theme of Flaubert's novel, drawing a sharp contrast between the image of the heroine and the petty-bourgeois tenor of life around her. In this production, the Kamerny Theatre remained true to its aesthetic programme, staging a tragedy in which the romantic overtones were predominant. Koonen's art, the art of the monumental symbol, was developed to the full. But it was a tragedy brimming with life, a tragedy of strong social implications.

The Three Sisters, *Stolen Happiness*, and *Madame Bovary* were true to the principles of socialist realism. Life was depicted in its historical concreteness, in movement. The strength of these classical productions was that they reflected profoundly on the fate of man in the modern world. There were no direct contrasts drawn or direct allusions made referring to the life of that time. That is not the way of art at its highest. But in the three sisters' yearning for a better life, in the sufferings of Mikola Zadorozhny, and in the drama of Emma Bovary, there was something that found a disturbing echo in the

souls of the audiences of that time—the tragedy of man in the unjust world of capitalism, the anguish of tragic destinies and waste; and the dream of happiness for free people, a dream encouraged by the actual life of socialist society. These classical plays echoed the mood of society because life was presented in all its complexity, and the predominating mood was one of faith in the courage and beauty of man and of the affirmation of the necessity for great ideals and shining endeavour.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE GAINED

The distinguishing characteristic of the Soviet theatre in the thirties was the growingly confident assertion of contemporary reality. The development of the playwright's art was an important contributing factor. In various republics, plays appeared which reflected the true processes of life, and the action of these plays centred on the heroes who were building the new society.

The multi-national character of the Soviet theatre, the strong threads binding the theatrical traditions of the peoples of the USSR, were brought to light with particular vividness in the artistic grasp of contemporary reality. This was natural. The unity of socialist practice, the common aim and the common roads to achieving this aim, found expression in the art of the drama and in the theatres of all the Soviet Republics.

Even at the end of the twenties, N. Pogodin's play *Tempo* caught a phenomenon particularly characteristic of socialist construction in the early stages. This was the accelerated tempo of life.

the new time-values with which man had to cope, the precipitate development of the country and of its people. This is the atmosphere that surrounds the characters in Pogodin's subsequent plays *Poem of an Axe*, *After the Ball*, and *My Friend*. The playwrights of the new national republics were troubled by the same problem. In 1933, for instance, the Ukrainian writer I. Kocherga wrote a play *The Watchmaker and the Chicken* where the time problem was presented in a new and poetically philosophical light.

Man's adjustment to building the new life and to the awakening of social activity and an intense awareness were one of the most important problems of life and art in the thirties. This problem was particularly acute in the republics, where remnants of the old feudal-landowning order still survived. One of the most vivid productions concerning the fate of woman in the new Soviet conditions was K. Yashen's *Love and Honour* on the stage of the Uzbek Khamza Theatre. It is noteworthy that this production reflected the definite direction which the entire Soviet theatre was taking and was close in spirit to a play of Russian life such as N. Pogodin's *After the Ball*.

The formation of the new man—worker, collective farmer, intellectual—and the processes taking place in all spheres of the country's socialist reality awakened the lively interest of the entire Soviet multi-national theatre. If this or that national playwright was unable fully to satisfy this interest, the theatres were willing to put on plays written in the other fraternal republics. An important contribution to the development of Soviet playwriting has been made by K. Krapiva, P. Kakabadze, D. Demirchyyan,

S. Shanshiashvili, N. Isanbete, A. Levada and G. Mdivani.

It was in the thirties that the exchange of plays among the national theatres achieved a widespread scale. Russian dramas contributed a great deal to the artistic expression of contemporary life on the stage. Plays by Pogodin, Afnogenov, Romashov, Kirshon, Shkvarkin, Gusev, Arbuzov, Slavin, Rakhmanov and other Russian writers have become part of the permanent repertory of the national theatres. Here is one telling example. The following plays by Russian Soviet dramatists were performed between 1930 and 1936 at the Armenian Sundukyan Theatre with its great national tradition: *The First Cavalry Army*, *Tempo*, *Poem of an Axe*, *Fear*, *The Rout* (after A. Fadeyev's novel), *Yegor Bulychev and Others*, *Intervention*, *Dostigayev and Others*, *Somebody Else's Child*, *The Miracle Alloy*, *Far Away*....

Making wide use of these and other plays, the republican national theatres drew on the experience of the Soviet stage without sacrificing their individuality in the process and while continuing to develop their own playwriting tradition. This process of collaboration and interaction among the theatres of the various Soviet peoples was fertile and manysided.

It is significant, for instance, that plays by the Ukrainian dramatist I. Mikitenko should have been translated into Russian, Moldavian, Turkmenian, Georgian and Armenian. In the same period (1930-36), Moscow theatre repertoires included *Pathétique Sonata* by M. Kulish, *Unknown Soldiers*, *Uagramov's Night* and *The Beginning of Life* by L. Pervomaisky, *Shine*, *Stars*, *An Affair of Honour*, *Our Country's Girls* by I. Mikitenko, *The Ballad of Britannicus* by

Y. Yanovsky, and *The Death of the Squadron* and *Platon Krechet* by A. Korneichuk.

As has already been mentioned, new contemporary characters made their entrances on the Soviet stage. They were people with socialist ideals and a practical turn of mind. The best plays of that time, particularly Pogodin's, reached a high artistic level, penetrating deep into the inner world of their new characters. Other plays were mere sketches, communicating only facts and guilty of oversimplification and embellishments.

What was needed was the revelation in depth of the nature and character of the new world-builders in all the complexity of their spiritual and intellectual life, an interpretation not merely of the practical aspect, but of the philosophy practised by the leading men of the time. To this end, playwrights and theatres naturally turned to their contemporaries and found the new characters there. We have already met a number of them. But there was another natural development at this point. Following the other arts—poetry, sculpture, and painting—the theatre turned its attention to V. I. Lenin, a man of history who personified in every detail and every characteristic the man who was to change the world.

During rehearsals at the Vakhtangov Theatre for *Yegor Bulychev*, Gorky suggested that the time had come for Lenin to be represented on stage by an actor. He named one who was capable of this—Boris Shchukin. Some years later, in 1937, Shchukin made his stage entrance as Lenin in Pogodin's *Man with a Kiss*.

A tradition was born. The same problem was tackled by other artists in the multi-national

Soviet theatre. *Man with a Rifle*, A. Korneichuk's *Truth*, *On the Banks of the Neva* by K. Trenyov, *Lenin* by A. Kapler and A. Zlatogorova, were produced by many theatres and in many languages. Performances of *Man with a Rifle* were particularly widespread. After Shchukin and Shtraukh, *Lenin* was portrayed not only by Russian actors such as Kramov and Skorobogatov, but by players of the many national republics such as Buchma and Krushelnitsky in the Ukraine, Molchanov in Byelorussia, Vagarshyan in Armenia, Khabibulaev in Uzbekistan, and Mubaryakov in Bashkiria.

The Soviet theatre was familiar with a great many works in which men and women of history and revolutionaries were at the centre of the action. But so profoundly alive is Lenin in the consciousness of the people, so inseparably does he combine the symbol of revolution with the human being who was so close to them, so vast, and yet so personal, is his image for each and everyone, that to create his image on stage is a task of enormous difficulty.

The writers and artists were able to overcome the difficulty because they had achieved a high socialist awareness, a true understanding of Lenin's world-wide and historical significance. But this was not the only reason. Faithfulness to the principles of realism was the solid basis for this creative achievement. "I realised," wrote N. Pogodin, "that for all my awe of Lenin's personality, I must treat Vladimir Ilyich's image like any other literary image, otherwise all was lost: the living spontaneity of the image would be sacrificed, and in its place there would only be quotations, which would inevitably protrude from the artistic fabric of the play."¹⁴

At first sight, it might seem that such an approach could run the risk of belittling the image, but in actual fact the writer chose the only valid course, combining wide historical scope and monumentality with the human truth of the individual human being.

When these productions were performed in public, they were treated as profoundly contemporary and not merely as historical plays. This is understandable, since in the years of socialism's decisive triumphs, in the years when the new man was beginning to emerge, Lenin's image was a living model of communist morality. It is no coincidence that plays about Lenin should have had such an important place in theatre repertories, during the war years, when the times demanded of the people every effort of which they were capable.

THE WAR YEARS AND AFTER

The theatre and the Great Patriotic War is one of the most telling pages in the history of Soviet art. Theatrical activity manifested itself in a variety of ways during those years. Artists formed companies, went to the front, and there—even at the front line itself, staged entire shows, extracts, and concerts. Once again it became clear, as in the days of the Revolution, that art was dear to the people even in the harsh times of war. Igor Ilyinsky's admission is worthy of note. "On my way to the front," he writes in his book *About Myself*, "I must confess I thought no one there would want to be bothered with us artists and I was rather annoyed at our being sent where we could only be a nuisance, not taking part in active fighting and depriving the

troops of their rations, transport, bread and billets. As it turned out, I was wrong. Within a few days, I realised just what these tours meant. The troops saw us as representatives of the whole country's feelings for them. Brotherly love, distress at their sufferings. Pride in their unassuming, stern bravery. Airmen or troops back from operations quite often never bothered to rest or have a meal, but made a dash for the concert, where they not only strained to hear words that inspired them to fresh feats of courage, but were often simply content to breathe the atmosphere of home, relax, laugh, become identified and involved with the multiform life of the concert stage, which all our people love so much."¹⁹

Tours of the front and theatres and companies working at the front were only one side of the theatre's achievement during the war years. On the home front, with many theatres working under evacuation conditions, the artistic life of the stage followed its natural creative course, and during this period productions were staged which have now become history. Once again, the lie was given to the old adage that when the guns speak, the Muses are silent.

Nineteen forty-two was a harsh year, but the Art Theatre staged the première of Nikolai Pogodin's *The Kremlin Chimes*, presented by the eighty-three-year-old V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko. The action centred on the image of Lenin, played by Alexei Gribov. Once again, the heroic pages of the revolutionary years came to life on the stage, and a prominent place was occupied by historical plays which dwelt on the theme of patriotic feeling. Audiences, however, naturally expected the theatre to give them an artistic inter-

pretation of what was happening at the time. Six months after war broke out, plays were staged which reflected the hard times that the people and the country were enduring: *The Russian People* by K. Simonov, *The Front* by A. Korneichuk, *Invasion* by L. Leonov and, later, *The People of Stalingrad* by Y. Chepurin and *An Officer of the Fleet* by A. Kron.

Events and images of the Great Patriotic War were mirrored in S. Kldiashvili's Georgian play *Reindeer Gorge*, in the works of Azerbaijani playwrights, *Uesa* by M. Ibragimov and *Expectation* by I. Effendiev, and in works by A. Auezov of Kazakhstan, B. Kerbabayev of Turkmenia, G. Jimiev of Ossetia, and by the Tatar writers Gizzat and M. Amir.

So active a creative response to the war by playwrights of the many Soviet peoples can, of course, be explained principally by the fact that in a time of severe trials, the common fate of the peoples of the Soviet Union was very much to the fore. It was this patriotic feeling that determined the work of the theatres.

The four years of the war were a crowded and complex stage in the development of the Soviet multi-national theatre. The stage was peopled with the combatant heroes of the times, and yet the air was filled with the tragic and heroic leit-motifs of historical drama: tragic and heroic drama sometimes rubbed shoulders with light comedy. We will not list all these plays by name, recall the various productions, or describe the many successive stages of this four-year period. One thing is indisputable: they were a chronicle of the war, and at the same time they played a realistic part in the spiritual life of a people at war. They were topical in

their time, but some have survived as examples of theatrical art at its highest.

At the end of 1941, something happened which was probably unique in the history of the theatre and of literature. Plays, which the public prefer to see rather than read, were published—not in a journal, not in a book, but in *Pravda*. These were K. Simonov's *The Russian People* and A. Korneichuk's *The Front*. There was nothing strange about this. They were printed because they were as necessary and indispensable as despatches from the front and war-correspondence from the battlefield. They challenged the reader with urgent and difficult problems and provided convincing answers in dramatic form.

The Soviet theatre responded to the war with promptitude and with action. The transition to peace time was more difficult. This is understandable. It was too complex simultaneously to cover the tragedy and joy of victory and enter into the spiritual world of a people who had survived four years of achievement and suffering and were now moving into a new phase of history.

The post-war period brought plays which have become part of the treasury of dramatic creative art. This took place in circumstances when the theatres were turning to genuine literature and were remaining true to their aesthetic principles. As regards the Russian stage, two plays were conspicuous for their striking difference in style: *The Young Guard*, adapted from the novel by A. Fadeyev and performed at the Moscow Drama Theatre under the direction of N. Okhlopkov, and Lev Tolstoi's *The Fruits of Enlightenment*, produced by M. Kedrov at the Art Theatre.

A heroic symphony was performed at the Drama Theatre, soon to be named after Mayakovskiy in 1952. A sharp contrast between war and peace, between joy in heroic achievement and tragic grief for the dead, between the harsh realities of war and the purging of pity and fear which was first discovered by the ancients, between fury at the foe and a brave, shining faith in ultimate victory. And all on the grand scale, inspired and romantic. Music and sculpture burst on to the stage and merged with the art of the actor. Behind the performance it was possible to sense the preoccupation of the director who staged this highly significant production as an artistic memorial to heroism. Equally important were truth of feeling, and the symbolic lily floating on the surface of the peaceful pond, and the streaming red banner under which stood the Young Guards men who had become immortal in death.

The Fruits of Enlightenment demonstrated all that was most fertile in the Art Theatre—the eloquent assurance of the actors even in the most risky comedy situations, the keen contemporary ideas developing imperceptibly and by degrees out of the action, the appealing authenticity of the characters on the stage. *The Fruits of Enlightenment* was a triumph for the cast at the Art Theatre. It was also directed with integrity and with an accurate feeling for the style of Tolstoi's play.

These two productions were in themselves of great artistic merit. But their significance in the development of the post-war theatre is that in spite of an acknowledged uniformity in the art of the theatre at the end of the forties, they assertively and by their own practical example

preserved the multiformity of the Soviet theatre's creative tendencies and the variety of its style.

FROM THE FIFTIES TO THE PRESENT DAY

In the mid-fifties, the Soviet theatre entered a new phase of development.

As before, the predominant place on the stage was taken by plays which reproduced the lives of Soviet men and women of the times. In the fifties and the sixties, a strong position was occupied and held in drama by writers of succeeding generations: S. Alyoshin, V. Rostov, L. Zotin, I. Dumbadze, A. Voloshin, I. Druze, A. Selyansky, I. Kasumov, F. Radomysky, V. Lazarev, A. Dufour, and others.

The best plays of the mid-fifties were seeking their way towards an understanding of the new life of the post-war period. The ranks of these plays were unexpectedly joined by Viktor Remez's comedy *Clouds*. *Clouds* — unexpectedly because it had been written by a young author who had made a name for himself as a children's writer and because it had first been staged in a children's theatre.

It soon became clear that Remez was following the trail blazed in Soviet drama by Savchenko, Arsenyev, Remez, Arshakov and other plays which had been particularly concerned with the ways life and psychology of the characters and with characters whom it was difficult to understand but whom it was impossible to despise. It was *Clouds* that gave birth to the first Soviet plays which, though they did not yet have the title of the best and most important plays of the century, showed that the best and most important plays of the twentieth century

ways, braggadocio, and careerism. The comedy introduced a new contemporary, Andrei Averin, who is seeking a goal in life and the way to achieve that goal.

The characters in the comedy are real, living people who cannot be marked "plus" or "minus", or identified as "positive" or "negative". This does not mean that the writer is impersonal towards his own creations or that he leaves us in doubt of his attitude to them. On the contrary, Rozov makes no attempt to conceal his sympathies and aversions, and is explicit about the human worth of his characters. Rozov's plays show an easily discernible lyrical principle, a frank and friendly disposition towards some, and negativeness, sometimes derision, sometimes fury, towards others. But the writer firmly refuses to adopt conventional symbols in order to illustrate human qualities: he knows perfectly well that people in real life are much more complex, and he sees no reason why the characters in a play should be drawn linearly.

In the complex, sharply individual and very concrete character of Andrei, the writer clarified the features of a new social and psychological type at an important stage of development in our lives. This is the main reason for the wide public interest in *Good Luck*. The play was first performed in 1954 in a production by the young director A. Efros at the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow, and was subsequently produced by many other theatres in different languages.

What are the facets which characterise a progressive man of the time? They could be enumerated as ideological conviction, communist morality and single-mindedness in the pursuit of

an ideal. But when it is a matter of art and of the creative image, then a list is inadequate to embrace the highest moral and ideological qualities of a human being. They can only be identified when personified in living, unique character. When Academician Dronov in Alyoshin's play *The People Inherit All* becomes one of the most powerful artistic images of a contemporary hero, isn't this because the writer, followed by the actors, reveals the spiritual world of this man in his living, special, profoundly personal character?

As interpreted by Nikolai Cherkasov at the Pushkin Drama Theatre in Leningrad (1962), Dronov is not a good man in the abstract. His image is one which cannot be detached from our times. He is contemporary in his ideas, in his standpoint in life, in his spiritual code, in the rhythm of his thoughts, in his turn of speech, in the intonation of his voice. Cherkasov's Dronov sometimes seems dry, even embittered; but this is all really a cloak for the great and rich soul of a man completely absorbed in his scientific work who sincerely loves people and trusts them. Since this Dronov is hostile to sensitivity and sentimentality, and since he represses his feelings and never betrays them openly, his passion sometimes burn at white heat. And it is this inner self-restraint, this roughness of spirit which characterise Dronov as a completely modern man.

Among the plays which represented contemporary Soviet life, a particularly conspicuous place was gained in the repertory, and for many long years, by Alexei Arbuzov's *Irkutsk Story*, first produced by Y. Simonov at the Vakhtangov Theatre in 1960.

'This is the stage story of how Valentina, an apparently empty-headed shop girl, found the

priggish conceit in all their manifestations, are the features most prominent in the best plays and shows.

In the theatrical achievements of the last few years, that is to say, in all forms of stage production which come under the general heading of theatre, a notable proportion is attributable to productions of classical dramas: Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, Gorky's *The Barbarians*, Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit*, Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, and Gorky's *The Philistines* at the Bolshoi Drama Theatre in Leningrad; Lev Tolstoi's *The Power of Darkness*, Chekhov's *Ivanov*, Ostrovsky's *It's Good To Be Right, But It's Better To Be Happy* at the Maly Theatre; Goncharov's *An Ordinary Tale* and Gorky's *The Lower Depths* at the Sovremennik Theatre; A. K. Tolstoi's *Death of Ivan the Terrible* at the Central Soviet Army Theatre; Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* at the Rustaveli Theatre; *Hamlet* at the Estonian Youth Theatre; *Anthony and Cleopatra* at the Azerbaijan Azizbekov Theatre, and others.

Was there a risk of contemporary themes being neglected because of the increased taste for the classics? There were no grounds for apprehension. The classics are an integral part of the culture of socialist society and its great spiritual treasury. The classics are classics precisely because they survive their times and live on in the future. It is no coincidence that a growing interest in the classics became marked in the mid-fifties and at the beginning of the sixties, when a new stage began in the social life of the country and much keener interest was shown in man and his spiritual world, and when a distaste for lack of ideals, lack of spirituality, and political apathy became much more pronounced. With

their humanist standpoint, their affirmation of a high morality, their truth and their psychological profundity, the classics have become particularly necessary in our own time.

It is fifteen years since the Maly Theatre's première of *The Power of Darkness*, yet audiences still flock to see this play. It also aroused considerable interest at the Theatre of Nations during the Paris Theatre Festival. Tolstoi's countryside with its darkness, nightmare and meaningless existence is now a thing of the past, but through the prism of the past shines the powerful and bright principle of humanity, and it is this principle, freed from religious overtones, which determines the inspiration behind the contemporary production of *The Power of Darkness*. It was directed by B. Ravenskikh, and the celebrated comedy actor I. Ilivinsky as Akim reached the heights of tragic art.

The Soviet theatre's interest in Dostoyevsky is significant. Artists have disclosed in his novels the depths of human psychology, a striving after the truth, justice and goodness. It was these qualities which determined the modernity of *The Idiot*, adapted and directed at the Bolshoi Drama Theatre by G. Tovstonogov. The director did not try to modernise the novel in any way and made no attempt to compromise with the contemporary in externals. Everything is as in the book, as if pages from an edition of the last century were being projected on to a screen to involve the spectator in the action. The simplicity and innocence of Prince Myshkin as played by Innocent Smekhovskiy, his organic distaste for what is phoney, vulgar and servile, his sense of decency, his love of his fellow beings as a normal code of

behaviour—all these found an immediate response with the Soviet public.

Next to Dostoyevsky, the inexhaustible Gorky. It might seem at first glance that Tovstonogov's production of *The Barbarians* has made a break with tradition, so unorthodox is the interpretation of the characters—especially that of Nadezhda Monakhova. In point of fact, *The Barbarians* in Leningrad is an artistic phenomenon in which the classical and the contemporary achieve a harmonious blend and in which there is a vigorous concern for man, his appointed destiny, and the ugliness and absurdity of a life without the spirit and without ideals.

After the classic production of *The Three Sisters* at the Art Theatre, any other interpretation of Chekhov's play seemed inconceivable. But time opens up new routes to the artist and makes different demands on him. G. Tovstonogov's version of *The Three Sisters* at the Bolshoi Drama Theatre aroused keen interest, because the director saw the well-known drama in a new light. What emerged was not just a yearning for a better life, not just compassion for people who deserve happiness but have been denied it. There was much more to Chekhov's play than that. The production brings up the idea of man's responsibility for his own life and the life of those about him, and indicated that it is man who decides whether to fight objective evil or whether to compromise with it. This was the bold and sharply contemporary meaning of *The Three Sisters* in Tovstonogov's production.

The classics attract the attention of various theatrical companies and extend beyond Russian dramatic literature. Shortly before his death, director Nikolai Okhlopkov produced Euripides'

Medea as a drama-concert in which the actors' images were combined with an orchestra, a chorus, and Taneyev's music from *The Orestea*. The national form of the Georgian theatre is clearly seen in another recent production of an ancient drama—Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* at the Rustaveli Theatre, directed by Dmitri Alekseev. As before, the theatre posters advertise plays by Shakespeare, Schiller, Lope de Vega, Goldoni, Gozzi and other classics of world drama.

The Soviet theatre follows closely and with interest the development of the drama in the socialist countries. There are plays by Bulgarian, German, Polish, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian writers. A significant phenomenon in recent years has been the Soviet theatre's encounter with the works of the outstanding German writer Bertolt Brecht. For a long time directors seemed uneasy about Brecht's plays, as if uncertain how to approach them. It was not an easy task to master the unusual form of Brecht's writings for the "epic theatre".

Difficult does not mean unattainable. The Estonian Kingissepp Theatre had great success with its production of *Herr Puntila and His Servant Matti*, directed by V. Panso. Here, Brecht's powerful satire was heard in full voice, pouring forth in theatrical grotesque and biting sarcasm about those who see omnipotence in money. Then Brecht came to the Russian stage. *Mother Courage and Her Children* was presented by M. Shtraukh at the Mayakovsky Theatre, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* by Polish director Erwin Axer at the Bolshoi Drama Theatre. Most of Brecht's plays are now performed on the Soviet stage. One of the most highly significant productions was *The Good Woman of*

Sezuan, produced by Y. Lyubimov with a cast of young actors at the Shchukin Theatre School. It subsequently became part of the repertory, under the same director, of the Moscow Theatre of Drama and Comedy.

Y. Lyubimov is true to Brecht. His production is a parable told in conventional and economical theatrical terms, with eloquent publicism, pantomime, open grotesque, and the authentic topicality on which the German writer is particularly insistent. But there are the depths of the inner world too, and that same objective truth of feeling to which Vakhtangov referred and which was indispensable to him in any play, even the most symbolic. The tale of Shen Te, a good woman who loves people and pays dearly for her goodness, was developed into a profoundly humanist production stimulating reflection on the contradictions of capitalist life, the means of resolving them, and man's right to the life of freedom he deserves.

As before, the Soviet theatre is greatly interested in modern Western playwrights. Theatre bills announce plays by Ernest Hemingway, Jean Anouilh, Eugene O'Neill, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Max Frisch, Heinrich Böll and other Western writers. The Soviet theatre is attracted by democratic ideals, by humanist conceptions, by a true picture of the bourgeois world and the contradictions which ravage it, and, of course, by consummate artistry. But it will not accept bourgeois ideology, to which it is openly opposed. It is hostile to the oversophisticated, decadent, essentially antipopular and antihumanist plays so widespread in the West at present.

The Soviet theatre is quick to widen the scope of its repertory. But this widening scope does not

mean the total lack of ideological discretion or discrimination. The worth of any play is defined within the sphere of its ideological content, its truthfulness in the representation of life, and the standpoint of the artist. The forms of socialist realism in theatrical art are infinitely varied, and it is important that they should express the ideological core of the play as vividly and as fully as possible. "In the art of socialist realism, which is based on the principles of partisanship and kinship with the people, bold pioneering in the artistic depiction of life goes hand in hand with the cultivation and development of the progressive traditions of world culture," states the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. "Writers, artists, musicians, theatrical workers and film makers will have better opportunities of displaying creative initiative and skill, using manifold forms, styles, and genres."

This brief survey ends with a few pages about the artistic multiformity and the creative quest of the contemporary Soviet theatre.

MULTIFORMITY—THE ORIGINS

The Soviet theatre today is typified by competition between the various styles, forms, manners, and individual creative trends. This does not mean that anarchic diversification predominates on the stage. The quest for new creative directions is determined by common ideological standpoints, a sense of public responsibility, and the seriousness of the challenges to be met. The theatre of socialist realism is openly and militantly hostile to formalistic art, no matter how novel the form it assumes. When foreign critics

interpret this rejection of formalism and abstractionism as a cause of uniformity in Soviet art, then they are either distorting the truth or are pitifully in error.

The multiformity of the Soviet theatre owes its existence to the fact that each great artist or artistic team, by putting its own experience of life into art, is perpetuating and multiplying the traditions closest to it, and bringing to life on stage its aesthetic views and artistic preferences. No one who has recently visited the Art Theatre or the Theatre of Comedy and Drama on the Taganka, the Sovremennik or the Vakhtangov, the Bolshoi Drama Theatre or the Leningrad Comedy Theatre, the Satire Theatre or the Central Soviet Army Theatre, will deny that these companies vary tremendously, in no way resemble one another, and are going their own individual ways.

Is there, then, anything common to these theatres and others not mentioned here by name, but which are also highly individual, distinctive and different? Indisputably. It is to be found in their ideological and aesthetic standpoint, in the identical directions followed by them in their creatively dissimilar quests.

This common factor is found in a striving for truth in the representation of man's inner world (*it was for this that Stanislavsky worked and for which he created his system*), and it is also found in the socialist and communist ideal which illuminates this striving.

There was a time when Stanislavsky's system was considered exclusive to the Moscow Art Theatre. It was sometimes said that his system was only suitable for interpreting psychological or domestic drama, and that it was inapplicable

to Shakespeare and the romantic dramas of more than just the Soviet playwriting tradition. Both these judgements are profoundly wrong. They have been refuted by the art of the contemporary Soviet theatre.

Stanislavsky's system belongs to the whole of scenic art. Stanislavsky affirmed the civic and social mission of the stage, founded its ethics, and created a doctrine of the collective nature of theatrical art. Stanislavsky's system is an aesthetic triumph and is one of the basic principles of realism in the Soviet theatre of today, with one necessary qualification: the essentials of Stanislavsky's theories should be understood in their widest implications.

The essentials of the theory are not that the actor should imitate the members of the Art Theatre company or the system's own creator, or that only an authentic, true-to-life picture should come to life on the stage, the only means by which the actor can follow the organic nature of art. The meaning and universal significance of Stanislavsky's system for all artists on the Soviet stage is otherwise. Whatever the artist's creative road—from careful verisimilitude to the most adventurous use of symbol—if he remains true to the heritage of Stanislavsky, he will preserve truth to human feeling, conduct and word, thereby producing a convincing interpretation of the part and revealing the character's inner world.

The fact is that Stanislavsky himself never restricted the domain of art to what was achieved by the Art Theatre even at its best. He was engaged in a perpetual search for the new, and his endeavours were valid for the whole enormous world of the contemporary theatre. Stanislavsky

himself demonstrated in *The Blue Bird* and *A Warm Heart*—which are still in the Theatre's repertory to this day—that truth of feeling and the organic nature of creativeness are essential not only for the subtle lyricism of Chekhov or for any kind of play dealing with everyday life, but also for the symbolic fairy tale and satire at its most daringly adventurous. In the revolutionary epic *Armoured Train 14-69*, the director, while fully comprehending the originality and majesty of the events represented in the play, did not yield an inch of the basic principles of his art or theory.

To examine today the art of the major directors and actors—those who studied under Stanislavsky and the products of other schools of interpretation—is to realise very clearly that for all the differences in their art, each of them in his own way draws on the experience acquired by the great theatrical reformer. Even artists who might seem far removed from his system testify to Stanislavsky's tremendous influence on their work. Nikolai Okhlopkov, a director with a preference for romantic drama, an adherent of theatrical symbolism and a pupil of Meyerhold's, comments: "Stanislavsky created a school. He allows scope for any creative trend. His system can be used by any artist, whatever his field of activity, whatever his direction. It does not in any way demand subservience to one particular theatre."²⁰

Another example is the Theatre of Comedy and Drama under the guidance of Yuri Lyubimov. It is obvious that this theatre's productions, such as *The Good Woman of Sezuan* or *Ten Days That Shook the World* after John Reed, stand apart from psychologically detailed style

of realism and are notable for the use of symbol, metaphor, and a blend of poetry and overt publicism. Yury Lyubimov is carrying on the Vakhtangov tradition and, even more, that of Meyerhold. Bertolt Brecht's aesthetics are close to him. But even in the most "symbolic" productions of this theatre, the irresistible truth of the actor's art is felt, and Stanislavsky's influence here is undeniable.

Virtually all the major Soviet directors are Stanislavsky's heirs in the wide sense of the word. The importance of his aesthetic principles has also been recognised by leading artists abroad, from Laurence Olivier to May Lan-fang, from Charles Chaplin to Peter Brook. But in the Soviet theatre of today, the Stanislavsky tradition is also being preserved in a more local and limited sense. The artistic trend connected with the creative work of the great director is still alive and developing.

This process is noticeable in the Moscow Art Theatre's best productions. An example may be provided not by the Art Theatre's usual plays, but by Jerome Kilty's *Dear Liar*, which is an unfailing success in Moscow. The form, a play in letters, is unusual. There are only two characters—Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell. How could it be made to work on stage? The characters never meet. All they do is write and receive letters, the text of which has been adapted for the dialogue. But it is precisely this that enables Art Theatre players Angelina Stepanova, Anatoly Ktorov, and director Iosif Rayevsky to penetrate man's psychology in depth, his inner world full of inherent drama. Everything is remarkably simple. The play is put over by purely histrionic means—intonation, economy of

movement, pauses, and a bare minimum of scenery and stage props. Yet the whole brims with human significance. In the personal letters, from which emerge the living, inimitable, intensely individual characters, one becomes aware of a drama which extends far beyond the lives of Shaw and Mrs. Campbell. Their great spiritual intimacy illuminates genuine human feelings as they come into violent conflict with the cruel world of deceit, hypocrisy, prejudice and lack of ideals.

The Stanislavsky tradition also survives and lives again in the work of other theatres. Among these, first mention must be given to the Bolshoi Drama Theatre in Leningrad and its director Georgi Tovstonogov, certain of whose productions have already been discussed.

The Bolshoi Drama Theatre bears no resemblance to the Moscow Art Theatre and its productions are quite unlike those staged by Stanislavsky. True art never repeats even the greatest examples of the past, but invariably bears the stamp of the time and the individual artist. As far as the living heritage of Stanislavsky is concerned, however, the work of Tovstonogov and his company is relevant, because here, in a new and original way, the life of the human spirit is revealed by deep penetration into human psychology, by inner truth, and by great civic thought. "In my opinion, the quality most essential to make the work of an artist contemporary," writes Tovstonogov, "is intellect, or concentration of thought. If this quality formerly used to be an individual speciality of talent only possessed by few truly great artists, it should now become the most important and decisive factor in the style of every stage artist. At the present

stage of the theatre's development, this is becoming one of the most significant of all the portents revealed by Stanislavsky." Does Tovstonogov mean by this that the author should no longer "live the part"? Certainly not. Himself an adherent of this school, he affirms that "what is most valuable and precious in the theatre are the inner psychological processes which comprise the mystery of art and the power of its enormous effect on the public".²¹

The tradition of Stanislavsky and the Art Theatre lives in the work of the young Moscow Sovremennik Theatre.

The Sovremennik is intimately connected with the Art Theatre. Most of its company, including its first artistic director Oleg Yefremov, qualified at the Art Theatre school. There is something of the early Art Theatre in the Sovremennik actual origins, in its clearly expressed studio unity of thought and in its active civic sense. But that is not all. The Sovremennik has inherited the best features of the Art Theatre's creative method, but has purified it of its set ways and reanimated it with a feeling for the times. It is difficult to formulate the basic artistic principles of the Sovremennik. This theatre is still finding its way, much is in process of formation, and not a simple and painless process. But the theatre's ambitions are clear—to achieve great inner truth in urgently contemporary productions dealing with the fundamental problems of life. And not by psychological sophistry or stage gimmicks, but by a higher verisimilitude, by a wealth of content presented in simple form.

The leading characteristic of the contemporary Soviet theatre lies in its continuing the best tradi-

tions accumulated over the last fifty years. We have already mentioned the development of the Stanislavsky tradition. The same can be said of the absorption and renewal of the artistic heritage of Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, Tairov, Marjanishvili, Kurbas, Akhmeteli, Smilgis, and other leading directors of the multi-national Soviet theatre.

The innovators of today's theatre have made many artistic discoveries. They have felt the influence of the times and have found expression for those times, so that it is wrong to see them as more or less diligent pupils. But they have certainly drawn heavily on those who laid the foundations of the Soviet theatre, and this is a solid cornerstone of the theatre's artistic multiformity.

In discussing this multiformity, we have dwelt mainly on the achievements of the directors. Understandably so, since in the contemporary theatre it is obviously the director who navigates the theatrical ship through artistic waters. The bright prospects for the future of the Soviet theatre are particularly due to the fact that the art of stage direction is undergoing a renaissance. In addition to veterans like Yuri Zavadsky and Mikhail Kedrov, new generations of directors have come to the forefront. As early as the fifties, directors such as Georgi Tovstonogov, Valentin Pluchek, Boris Ravenskih and Dmitri Alexidze were beginning to attract notice. They were later joined by future leading directors Oleg Yefremov, Yevgeny Simonov, Boris Lvov-Anokhin, Yuri Lyubimov, Anatoly Efros, Valdemar Panso and Kaarel Ird. The sixties saw the arrival of a new and younger breed of directors — Leonid Kheifetz, Mark Zakharov, Arnold Shapiro, Vladimir Monakhov, and many others.

The wealth and variety of the Soviet theatre is distinctly expressed in the art of the actor. Meeting the audience face to face across the footlights, the actor brings to life on stage the playwright's inspiration and the director's ideas. Every first-class actor is a vivid and inimitable personality, an artist, a creator and a citizen.

Compare two typical actors, Ruben Simonov and Nikolai Simonov. The first has a feeling for music, elegance, a brilliant flair for comedy and consummate artistry. But his skill would shine with no more than a superficial glitter were not this actor's art imbued with a profound feeling for humanity. Joy in being alive, faith in man, and suffering on man's behalf—these are at the root of Ruben Simonov's art. Nikolai Simonov, on the other hand, has power, monumentality, psychology on the grand scale. And he too has his theme—man in his greatness of spirit conquers all that is most difficult in life, even when his own fate is tragic.

Or take Alla Tarasova and Lyubov Dobrzhanskaya. In the first, a tremendous range of feeling, from hidden passion to temperament of explosive violence. In the second, a restraint that conceals strong, pent-up emotions, purity, and enchanting simplicity.

There are aesthetic differences in the styles of the younger actors also: Oleg Yefremov and Sergei Yursky for instance. Absolute truth to life, naturalness and a total identification of the actor with his part in the one. In the other—a keen eloquence of movement, penetration into the essence of man through the alienation effects and a blend of the realistic and the grotesque.

The variety of styles and forms in the Soviet theatre is a natural and inevitable consequence

of its multi-national character, as the theatres of a great many peoples have become part of Soviet theatrical culture on equal terms. Each national theatre clearly bears the stamp of its own historically developing national character and is marked by specific characteristics of artistic form as determined by the history of the people, its culture, and its artistic traditions. At its recent 24th Congress the Party expressed its great satisfaction with the fact that "literature and art are fruitfully developing in all our republics, in dozens of languages of the peoples of the USSR, in the vivid diversity of national forms".

There have been instances of national character being interpreted wrongly. National forms have been typified by emphasis on ethnic factors and by the introduction of archaic ritual elements. But the main road travelled by the theatres of the Soviet peoples is marked by great triumphs and is altogether different. National character in art is manifest in contemporary forms of life. This is where genuine innovation is found, predetermined by the actual life of the socialist nations at the contemporary stage of their development, and this is where the convergence of the national cultures can be observed.

Does this mean that the theatres of the various nations are losing the character and qualities of their national forms and that they are obliterating their own traditions? Of course not. It merely means that tradition is being drawn upon to provide all that is alive and has preserved the power of expression, and new forms are being created in conformity with content, with the spiritual make-up of contemporary man.

Of course it must be observed that the contemporary Georgian theatre, to take one example,

is not standardised. There is rivalry of styles and forms here as in the Russian theatre and in the theatre of the other nationalities. But there are predominating national traditions in the work of the directors and actors. These include an operatic temperament, an inclination for ceremonial high drama and epic. Needless to say, these terms do not cover all the rich resources of the Georgian theatre, but they are very much in evidence in D. Alexidze's production of *Oedipus the King*, which has already been mentioned, and in the work of outstanding artists like A. Khorava, A. Vasadze, S. Zakariadze, V. Anjaparidze, and actors of the younger generations.

Inspiration and pathos are characteristic of the Armenian theatre, as they have been for many centuries. But in the contemporary Armenian theatre, pathos and lyricism are inextricably linked with a close attention to everyday life. In the best productions of director Vartan Ajemyan—*The Rock*, *Namus* and *Chaos*—equal importance is due to dynamic concentration, inspired heroics, attention to the details of national life, and accuracy in the reproduction of life's canvas.

In addition to the classics and the new national playwriting tradition, the Estonian theatre is notable for special stylistic features. Here too, of course, there are many forms and much individuality. There could be no confusing the Vainemuine Theatre, under Kaarel Ird, with the Kingissepp Theatre at Tallinn. But both have something in common which springs from the national heritage. The young director Valdemar Panso was one of the first in the country to stage Brecht's *Herr Puntila and His Servant Matti*. This production shows an interesting combination of

the primitive, frank symbolism of the old folk theatre with theatrical gaiety and a keen contemporary intellectuality; of monumental satirical imagery with light, elegant irony. Merged in this way, all these elements have proved to be very much in the spirit of Brecht and, when examined closely, reveal certain extremely important characteristics of the Estonian theatre today.

Latvian theatrical art is fertile and multiform. One of the most brilliant talents in the Latvian theatre was the late Eduards Smilgis. He was master of things—the romantic theatre of Rainis and the epic poem. It was doubtless no coincidence that the Latvian Art Theatre undertook the most difficult of artistic challenges, a production of Tolstoi's *War and Peace* adapted for the stage by Smilgis. A passionate advocate of the poetic drama and intolerant of illustrateness in any form, the director naturally omitted a great deal from the novel. But what mattered in it was brought to life on the stage. His success is due to his subordination of the poetic drama to the laws of the theatre and to his adherence to his principles of brevity, romanticism, and a driving pace.

Here is an opinion of the national characteristics of stage art by Doctor Kerimi, an expert on the Turkmenian theatre, a young professional theatre which only came into existence after the October Revolution. "National language characteristics, the artistic traditions of the people, the features of its life, customs and manners and, above all, its national character, which have, of course, been in constant process of development but which have preserved certain stable features over a long period of time—all these find

expression in art.... The national characteristics of the Kazakh theatre may be defined as concealed temperament, emotional restraint and majestic simplicity. As distinct from the Georgian, Kazakh, Azerbaijan or Uzbek theatres, which are notable for emotional uplift, a profound sense of drama and picturesque eloquence, the national form of the Turkmenian theatre is distinguished by an inner, restrained temperament of tremendous power, and by dilatoriness and brevity in the expression of emotions which are always meaningful and monolithic, and are evidence of noble courage and a stern monumentality."²¹

These brief formulæ cannot, of course, do more than hint at the living wealth of the national theatrical cultures, but certain characteristics in artistic practice have, in our view, been defined correctly.

* * *

It is not always possible to establish direct connections between the events of life, even the most significant ones, and the phenomena of art. But there can be no doubt that the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, celebrated all over the world, was also reflected in the Soviet theatre.

Recent seasons clearly expressed the theatre's ideological and creative quest. From the heights of historical experience, the theatre surveyed the spiritual content of the great Revolution, and it is significant that the playbills should have featured new versions of plays written twenty, thirty or forty years ago. New works were written about the Revolution, new discoveries were made by playwrights, directors, and actors in bringing

Lenin's image to life on the stage. Theatres closely study the contemporary life of Soviet society and endeavour to identify the essential characteristics of today's heroes. Great new successes have been achieved in staging the classics. And all in many different forms, genres, and styles, in the art of the sharply expressed individuality of playwrights, directors and actors.

As regards the traditions of the Soviet theatre, the meaning of this concept is not, of course, limited to the heritage of the past. The last fifty years have seen the creation, still in progress, of new Soviet theatrical traditions. The principles of tradition and innovation continue to enrich the art of socialist realism in organic wholeness and in a living, dynamic functional process.

- 1 M. Gorky, *Uncollected Literary Critical Articles*, Moscow, 1941, p. 37. (Russ. ed.)
- 2 B. Zakhava, *Vakhtangov and His Studio*, Moscow, 1930, p. 77. (Russ. ed.)
- 3 Y. Vakhtangov, *Materials and Articles*, Moscow, 1959, p. 246. (Russ. ed.)
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 240-42.
- 6 A. V. Lunacharsky, *On the Theatre and Dramaturgy*, Moscow, 1958, Vol. I, pp. 373-79. (Russ. ed.)
- 7 V. I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art*, 1970, pp. 253-54.
- 8 *Political Reactions of the Western Press to the Tours of the Moscow State Kamerny Theatre*, Moscow, 1924. (Russ. ed.)

- ⁹ A. V. Lunacharsky, "On the Theatre and Dramaturgy" *Collected Works*, Vol I, Moscow, 1954, p 374
- ¹⁰ K. S. Stanislavsky, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1958, p 308
- ¹¹ K. A. Marjanishvili, *Memoirs, Articles, Lectures*, Tbilisi 1958, p. 452
- ¹² M. Bulgakov, *Plays*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1962, p 10
- ¹³ *On the Party and Soviet Press*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1954, p 346.
- ¹⁴ K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works*, Russ. ed., Vol I, 1959, p 210
- ¹⁵ Yevgeny Uakhtangov, Moscow, 1959, p. 213
- ¹⁶ N. Gorchakov, *Lessons in Direction from Uakhtangov*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1957, p 184
- ¹⁷ A. Buchma, "Actor and Image", *Sovetskoye teatrstvo* 28 November, 1950
- ¹⁸ *Uoprosy literatury*, (Problems of Literature) No. 9, in Russian, 1959, p 83
- ¹⁹ I. Ilyinsky, *About Myself*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1961 pp 529-30.
- ²⁰ *Theatre No 3*, in Russian, Moscow, 1963
- ²¹ G. Tovstonogov, *The Profession of Stage Director*, Moscow, 1968, p. 77.
- ²² *The Way of Soviet Art*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1963, p 78



B. YARUSTOVSKY

**Notes on Soviet
Music**



We know from Western press reports that Sergei Prokofiev's compositions have for the past five years invariably headed the list of works played by symphony orchestras all over the world. The best orchestras and conductors abroad perform Dmitry Shostakovich's new works as soon as they have had their Moscow and Leningrad premières, while strolling musicians who are heard in the streets of almost every city playing the "Sabre Dance" from Aram Khachaturyan's ballet *Gayaneh* often have no idea who has composed this universally popular piece. The songs "Moscow Nights" by Vasily Solovyov-Sedoi and "Katyusha" by Matvei Blanter are not only sung in many languages but are used as themes for virtuoso piano variations (for instance, by Van Cliburn)—a popularity which any composer may envy.

Need we remind our readers of the triumphs scored by Soviet performers at international music competitions? Since Lev Oborin won the victor's laurels at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw in 1927—which seems to us ages ago—the Soviet Union has to this day been supplying world musical culture with hundreds of talented virtuosos. Today the number of Soviet musicians who are international prize-winners exceeds 300; in all parts of the world they attract to concert halls thousands upon thousands of music-lovers who come to enjoy their art, while such artists as Svyatoslav Richter, Mstislav Rostropovich and David Oistrakh have long ago deservedly won the title of "the first musician of our time".

We will not tax the readers' patience with further proofs of the tremendous popularity Soviet music enjoys both in our country and abroad.

We would rather discuss in what lies the appeal of Soviet music for the listeners. In this connection I recall the following episode. I attended once an international music festival in Los Angeles, which attracted many of the world's leading musicians—Igor Stravinsky, Darius Milhaud, Werner Egk, Roy Harris, Karl Blomdahl, Lucas Foss, Kara Karayev, Tikhon Khrennikov—and quite a few younger composers. Soviet music was performed on the seventh, the closing, day of the festival and was a signal success with the audience that filled the spacious South California University Auditorium. Certain members of the audience discussed with me the reasons of that success and their ideas may be summarised as follows: "Whereas the imagery and the message in most of the works by Western composers, often very talented, are limited to what may be termed 'negative' emotions—fear, depression, nervous excitement and loneliness—Soviet musical compositions assure the listeners that modern man can enjoy himself, cherish day-dreams, fight and hate, expressing in music universal, collective feelings, in other words, that he can experience the varied and natural gamut of human emotions, in the first place those that are nearest to the heart of millions of people of the globe who often hold most diverse political convictions." I was told that "...we love Soviet music because it is able to raise its voice in protest at the aggression of the anti-humanist forces and in defence of all that is human in man. That is why we experience its emotional

appeal...." I said that the idiom of Soviet musical works might have had something to do with evoking their emotional experiences, because for the most part that idiom was, as Moussorgsky put it, "meant to speak with the people at large and not with a narrow audience of the composer's closest associates".

True, not all musicians favour today the ability of a work of music to appeal to broad audiences, making them experience its emotional message and share the composer's ideas. At any rate, this applies to quite a few music critics, the aesthetic judges of the Western press. Soviet art workers, at least an overwhelming majority of them, are convinced that a work of art incapable of finding response in the hearts of fairly large audiences is no work of art as a social phenomenon, that it cannot afford genuine aesthetic enjoyment and arouse noble feelings in man. But are not these the essence of the artist's social mission in general and in socialist society in particular?

This is what Lenin said in discussing the principles of socialist art: "Art belongs to the people. It must have its roots in the very thickness of the broad working masses. It must be comprehensible to the masses and be loved by them. It must unite the feelings, thoughts and will of the masses, elevate them. It must awaken the artist in them and educate them".¹

Let us consider certain facts from the first stage in the history of Soviet music, which show to us very convincingly and graphically the outlines of the future art of a socialist country as visualised by Lenin in the early twenties.

Shortly after the October Revolution Lenin signed a number of decrees relating to music

They dealt with the nationalisation of music publishing firms and with establishing the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of Education over the Petrograd and Moscow conservatoires. The next steps were the nationalisation of private music schools, of the archives and effects belonging to the Imperial Russian Music Society, of the libraries (book and music) belonging to the Count Sheremetev Musico-Historical Society, and the transformation of the former Court *A Capella* Choir into a People's Choral Academy. Finally, on December 1, 1918, was published the Decree "On Scientific, Literary, Musical and Art Works", signed by Lenin, by which the People's Commissariat of Education proclaimed all works, whether published or unpublished, in whosoever hands they may be, the property of the RSFSR.

Theatrical and concert activities came in for big changes. To quote an ironical review from a bourgeois newspaper that still continued to be published: "Singers appear at the Club of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army where admittance is 50 kopeks, and 25 kopeks for Red Army men ... Chaliapin sings praises to Karl Marx ... the Russian actor fraternises with the proletariat. . . ."²

At the Bakhrushin Museum of the Theatre in Moscow, the visitors' attention is attracted by the faded photographs of theatre and concert auditoria literally "invaded" by the new spectators in the first post-revolutionary years. You see bearded men in soldiers' greatcoats, sailors in pea-jackets, some with rifles in their hands, young peasants in Russian shirts and girls in red kerchiefs, sitting in the gilded stalls and boxes. That was a wonderful regeneration of the pit, one that made unprecedented demands on the creators of new art. One photograph shows a splendid room at the

Winter Palace, where only a few days before none but high-ranking courtiers could enter and where workers and peasants in greatcoats sit listening to Mozart's Requiem. The same happened at the Bolshoi Theatre, where at the concert marking the first anniversary of the Revolution works by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky were played before a soldiers' audience. A whole series of concerts of Beethoven's music was given in the first concert season of 1917-18. A new type of entertainment, called "concert-meeting" sprang up, at which speeches in support of the Revolution alternated with performances of classical music, for instance, Scriabin's Poem of Ecstasy and the third movement from Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, under the direction of such musicians as Alexander Glazunov, Grzegorz Fitelberg and Emil Cooper.

A feature of the musical scene in those remote times were grand musico-scenic entertainments presented in public squares on revolutionary holidays. The performers were soloists, choral groups, bands and orchestras both professional and amateur. This is what an eye-witness relates about the entertainment held on May Day in Petrograd, in 1920: "The Military Commissariat had a band of trumpeters stationed on the upper terrace of the Engineers Castle, facing the Summer Gardens. The Political Department of the Commissariat was presenting Euripides's 'Hippolitus' on the stairs under the terrace; Archangelsky's Choir appeared on a specially constructed raft floating in the semi-circular pond of the Summer Gardens. The Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre's company was giving Gluck's 'May Queen' over the Lebyazhya Ditch, near the Square of the Sleeping Psyche. A puppet show was in progress at the

big Chocolate Pavilion on the bank of the Fontanka, and the *A Cappella* Choir sang on the Neva Embankment. Bands and orchestras were playing in various parts of the Gardens, and boats with singers and guitarists were scouring the Neva, the Fontanka, the Moika and the Lebyazhya Ditch.³

We have given this long quotation to make the readers feel the atmosphere of the festivities held in the first post-revolutionary years. Those open-air synthetic entertainments showed an unmistakable influence of the antique art and the French Revolution traditions. Their stylistic heterogeneity and certain naïveté were proof of a rather primitive artistic thinking, quite natural under the circumstances, and of a sincere desire to meet the various requirements of thousands upon thousands of spectators and listeners. The entertainments featuring classical music were in keeping with Lenin's precept "to make all art treasures accessible to the working people".

In one of the decrees (the one dealing with the conservatoires) we find the very significant words "State-sponsored musical development" written in Lenin's hand. The implementation of this idea of Lenin's was begun in the very first post-revolutionary years, amidst hunger and devastation. One more remarkable feature of that decree is the statement that the music schools were given over to the People's Commissariat of Education "on an equal footing with other institutions of higher learning" (italics by the Author).⁴ In the conditions obtaining in Russia at the time this meant a lot: it meant that for the first time in history higher musical education was put on an equal basis with higher education in general, that a musician could no longer be regarded (as was the

worthy that already in 1918 the Bolshoi Theatre revived some of Wagner's operas it had dropped during the First World War.

Lenin's interest in the Bolshoi Theatre was not accidental: its activities were an object of heated polemics just then. Many of the "radicals", for instance, representatives of the Proletkult, regarded the Bolshoi Theatre as a stronghold of old, aristocratic, culture; they believed it to be a blot on the new, proletarian, art and clamoured for its closing. Lenin did not deny that the Bolshoi productions were somewhat conservative as were those of the Mariinsky Opera House in Petrograd (indeed, the founding of the Maly Opera House in that city was further proof of that),⁶ but even in the hardest years of the Civil War the Soviet Government continued its support of the Bolshoi Theatre. In the course of five months of the 1918-19 season out of its meagre budget the young famine-stricken Soviet state appropriated over 4,000,000 rubles to make up the theatre's deficit—truly an astonishing generosity! This fact reflects like a drop of water Lenin's high principledness, his conviction that the new socialist culture was a lawful heir to all treasures accumulated by the spiritual culture of past ages.

Naturally, the problem was not confined to the Bolshoi Theatre: the country's leading conservatoires—the Petrograd, Moscow and Kiev—continued their work in those harrowing years. The workers' and peasants' government placed at the head of these music schools outstanding Russian composers Alexander Glazunov, Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov and Reinhold Glière (incidentally, Glière was somewhat younger than his two venerable colleagues). This was in no small measure responsible for the fact that despite the

anarchistic attacks on the part of "Leftist" leaders, representatives of the Proletkult, the training of Soviet musicians at the conservatoires proceeded on a high professional level. In 1926, Nikolai Myaskovsky came to teach composition at the Moscow Conservatoire while at the Leningrad Conservatoire young composers were taught by Vladimir Shcherbachev. The classes of these two professors proved the main training ground for a new generation of Soviet composers. Here the students assimilated the precious experience of classical music and mastered the technique of their craft. Here, too, their ideological and aesthetic views were shaped, with particular emphasis on symphony and symphonism.

In the course of the twenties and early thirties the conservatoires graduated such musicians as Dmitry Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturyan and Dmitry Kabalevsky, composers, the pianist Lev Oborin, and the violinist David Oistrakh, to name but a few. Already in the mid-twenties Shostakovich's First Symphony had its première in the concert auditoria of many countries of the world and Lev Oborin carried off First Prize at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw. Both masters were graduates of the new, Soviet, music school and, along with the first Soviet revolutionary songs, were the heralds of a new, socialist, musical culture.

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The question to what extent artistic experience of the past should be utilised by socialist culture, including music, became an object of animated controversy in the twenties. Feeling ran particularly high in the latter half of the decade when

many novelties of contemporary Western music, little known until then, had found their way to the concert stage. Those were works by Stravinsky, "The Six", Hindemith, Krenek and some other composers. As is well known, the authors of the more radical, "avant-garde" works rejected tradition, and some of the young Soviet composers came to protest vigorously at the classical musical idiom which, to them, meant old culture.

A curious fact is that some of the phenomena of Western music appealed to Soviet composers for reasons quite different from those that had guided the composers who wrote *Pacific 231* and *Der Sprung über den Schatten*. While in the case of young Honegger and Krenek the dynamics, the motor effect, the predominance of the rhythmic element and the linear writing had been determined chiefly by the urbanistic tendencies characteristic of contemporary art,⁷ similar (or related) techniques were associated in the minds of Dmitry Shostakovich, Alexander Mosolov, Gavriil Popov and Vladimir Deshevov with the Proletkultist ideas. "Render the workers that which is theirs" was the slogan of Proletkult leaders who hailed everything that, in their opinion, should appeal to the proletarians who worked at the bench—everything that was expected to express the spirit of industrialisation, interpreted with a naive radicalism. That is why rhythmic, noisy "machinistic music" and active dynamics played such a prominent part in the Second and Third symphonies and the *Bolt factory* by Dmitry Shostakovich, the *Iron Foundry* by Alexander Mosolov, in Vladimir Deshevov's operas *Ice and Steel* *Sergei Prokofiev's* ballet *The Age of Steel* and some other works composed in the

Other composers strove to express new moods and emotions by more traditional methods. They chose new subjects glorifying freedom and new heroes (usually popular leaders from Russia's history, for instance, Stepan Razin, Yemelyan Pugachov, the Decembrists); there were a few attempts to portray Soviet reality as well. In such instances old revolutionary songs, and later, songs by Soviet composers were introduced into operas and symphonies, often by way of quotation. The best work of this kind is Reinhold Glière's ballet *The Red Poppy* (1925), which gained wide popularity. Along with time-hallowed dance suites and divertissements (a suite of national dances, one of modern West-European dances, the *Dream of Tao Hua*, etc.), in this ballet were heard the heroic strains of the *Internationale* characterising the Soviet captain and of the "Yablochko", one of the most popular ditties of the twenties, whose perky theme was used for the *Soviet sailors' dance*. Another innovation making its first appearance in ballet was the *Coolies' Dance*, the unprecedented instance of the realm of elegant sylphs and charming young princes being invaded by the new, plebeian, dance elements based on the imitation of working motions (the coolies' heavy tread) and on contemporary democratic dances. The importance of these innovations for a type of entertainment where old aesthetic canons continued to hold indisputable sway cannot be overestimated.

New song intonations began to appear with particular rapidity in the early thirties. There were solid grounds for that phenomenon. The Great October Socialist Revolution proved an historical event that had shaken all aspects of the world's social life. In particular it was responsible

for what Academician Boris Asafyev termed "intonation crisis". The regularity with which these crises manifest themselves at different stages of the historical process indicates a deep connection between the spiritual life of society and the language of music. As a rule, music reacts to historical upheavals somewhat belatedly as compared with the sister arts, but it by no means ignores them.⁸ In order to give expression to the new content, many composers of the twenties had recourse—sometimes without justification—to various formal devices which happened to have little in common with the new content. That was purely formal innovation in no way related to the inner world of the nation building socialist society. When such was the case, things did not go beyond sensational premières, after which the audiences showed a rapid decline.

But new songs were real harbingers of the new epoch, proving the correctness of the Russian saying that "New times demand new tunes". Soviet songs combined national elements with the international revolutionary song traditions, oratorical speech inflections and modern, active rhythms. Vladimir Zakharov's songs "Pathway", "Who Knows What's in His Mind", "Along the Village Street" and some others may serve as good illustrations. All of them, first presented by the Pyatnitsky Russian Folk Song Choir and gaining immediate popularity, were deeply rooted in the old Russian peasant traditions (the drawn-out, cantilena songs as well as the quick ditties—*chastushkas*). The composer, however, had made noticeable changes in the familiar intonations, bringing them closer to the volitional songs of the Revolution and introducing invigorating elements into the old modes and rhythmic pat-

terns. As a result, the songs became quite different from their prototypes: they were meant for villages which were transformed along socialist lines, they expressed a new range of emotions experienced by the peasants, they captured the new rhythm of the peasants' life.

The thirties saw the appearance of the first "song-operas" exemplified by Ivan Dzerzhinsky's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, and of song-inspired symphony music, for instance, the works in this form by Lev Knipper, Vissarion Shebalin's *Perekop Symphony* and Nikolai Myaskovsky's *Sixteenth Symphony*.

As has already been noted, that was quite natural, particularly at the first stage of the reform in the sphere of intonations. But whereas the introduction of songs was to a certain extent justifiable in opera, a democratic form of stage music demanding broad strokes of the brush, symphonies based on quoting song themes proved short-lived, because they were mere artistic compromises. As often as not, "song-symphonies" were composed to commemorate some historical event or other, which frequently led to naturalism in their imagery, to the disregard of the main principle of symphony music—the presence of *generalised imagery*. Besides, the portrayal of concrete subjects borrowed directly from life required the assistance of words uttered by chorus or soloists. Thus symphony was in danger of degenerating into a kind of hybrid vocal-symphonic form.⁹ The danger of the symphonic principle losing its value grew particularly great after the appearance in the press of articles extolling "song-symphonism" and condemning "pure" music as ideologically meaningless and *inferior* kind of music. As Shostakovich said ironically at a dis-

pute on Soviet symphonism in 1935, ' If you tag verses to your work, you've got meaning but if you don't, you're a formalist '

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To Dmitry Shostakovich goes the credit for initiating the trend, in the mid-thirties, of restoring to its full rights genuine symphony with its philosophical generalisation of life's phenomena. His Fourth, and especially Fifth, symphonies are convincing proofs of this. Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony is more than a reflection of what was peculiar to his generation at that particular time: new and new generations will find in it spiritual food and will derive from it aesthetic pleasure, born, naturally, of new associations and mediated in a new way.

The triumphs of the Fifth Symphony on the concert stages all over the world, its indisputable recognition as a classic work of Soviet and world music, are very significant, all the more so if we bear in mind that just at the time of its appearance the anti-symphonic trend was fairly well pronounced in Western music. There, the transition was in progress from symphony as a form suited for a profoundly philosophical interpretation of life to symphony as a concert piece, a mere play of sounds, just "music for strings"—and nothing more. The preservation of symphony as a form of meditation on life, the realisation of this form in a renovated but nevertheless a large-scale cycle by Shostakovich proved beyond doubt the viability of symphony as a work in several movements, its ability to embody the conflicts and collisions of the new epoch. It goes without saying that the form had undergone renovation, that it was a synthesis of the achievements of romantic

symphony and of Bach's intellectual approach and polyphonic thinking. This synthesis gave ample scope for expressing the intellectual content of our dramatic times (even to capturing in music the process of thinking itself, presenting the idea in motion, usually in the first and the slow movements). A new, more refined treatment of modes, going as far as polytonality (and even atonality), enabled the composer to present the conflicts with greater forcefulness and expressiveness and make his imagery more life-like.

The three symphonies written by Dmitry Shostakovich in the thirties, his Fourth, Fifth and Sixth, are the pride of Soviet music. They have stimulated the work of Soviet composers in the sphere of symphony in several movements, a renovated form that was quite up to giving expression to new imagery. They exercised an indisputable influence on musical development in other countries as well.

Soviet music of the thirties showed other tendencies characteristic of socialist culture in the making.

Late in the twenties Leningrad started holding annual *Olympiads of amateur art* and Moscow took up the tradition in 1936. The Olympiads were open-air festivals on a grand scale, attracting thousand-strong groups of performers, a further development of the mass synthetic entertainments that have been described earlier. At the same time they were a new stage in the evolution of amateur art activities, involving hundreds of thousands of art groups, choruses, ensembles, bands and orchestras. The activities were directed by thousands of professional musicians eager to improve the tastes of the broad masses and to bring great art to millions of the working

people. The Olympiads prompted composers to create new musical forms suitable for the open air, for the public square, utilising everything that had been introduced by the Revolution into the life of society. The socialist way of life made for the development of various specific art forms determined by new customs, new relationships and so on. This affected, in the first place, popular songs, songs from films, music for public festivities and for amateur performances. Such forms were all but unknown in the West.

All this led to the emergence of synthetic forms which have persisted to this day: Georgy Sviridov's *Oratorio Pathétique* to Vladimir Mayakovsky's words for soloist (whose part is both vocal and oratorical), an immense chorus and orchestra, composed in the late fifties, is an example of the form in question.

The thirties gave birth to one more viable tradition—the holding of ten-day reviews of the art of fraternal republics in Moscow. Dozens of such reviews had taken place up to the war year 1941; they were resumed after the war. The national art festivals proved (especially in the beginning) powerful stimuli to the appearance, or quick development, of professional art in the given republics, including such as had no professional musicians except folk bards variously called *ashugs*, *akyns* and so on. In the years preceding the war, symphony orchestras and opera houses were founded and ensembles of folk instruments were reorganised in many of the national republics. Some outstanding Russian and Ukrainian musicians paid long visits to these republics in order to set on foot their musical activities. Special studios were opened at the Moscow and Leningrad conservatoires to train professional compos-

ers, singers and instrumentalists particularly for the Central Asian republics. Graduates of these studios subsequently formed the core of the republics' artistic forces, becoming active builders of the new national musical cultures.

The reviews of national art not only showed how rich the republics were in talented musicians but they also brought to the country at large new melodic complexes, in particular, intonations of folk music of the Caucasus and Central Asia, with the result that quite a few Russian composers began to explore this material.¹⁰ Among the artistes from the non-Russian republics who gained country-wide popularity were composers Andrei Balanchivadze, a Georgian, Vano Muradeli, an Armenian, Nazib Zhiganov, a Tatar, and Aram Khachaturyan, an Armenian whose ballet *Gayaneh* and piano and violin concerto, composed at the end of the thirties, proved of exceptional importance for the whole of Soviet music.

While still a pupil of Mikhail Gnesin and Nikolai Myaskovsky at the Moscow Conservatoire, Aram Khachaturyan's original talent exercised a considerable influence on his fellow-students. The polymodality and polyrhythms, the improvisatory method of form construction and peculiar chords borrowed by Khachaturyan from his musical surroundings in Transcaucasia wrought a marked change in the musical perception and, consequently, in the musical thinking of his Russian colleagues. As was but natural, Khachaturyan, on the other hand, experienced the influence of Russian music, since he received his musical training in one of its centres; Western music, too, left its mark on him, particularly Ravel. However, many of the traits of Khachaturyan's style

which some Western critics erroneously attribute to Western influences (for example, polytonality and polyrhythmics so characteristic of modern music) had come into his work through the creative assimilation of the original musical language of his native Armenia.

Thus proceeded the highly fruitful interpenetration of the cultures of fraternal peoples in the Soviet country, arising from the new way of life of the multi-national socialist society.

Another effective stimulus for the development of music in the thirties came from the screen. Its influence seemed at first to be limited to songs, but actually the cinema proved a medium where the melodic style of Soviet music was taking shape. As a rule, the songs were associated with modern life, with the images of socialist reality presented on the screen. The music written for films was in no small measure influenced by the poets and by such outstanding directors as Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Alexander Dovzhenko and Grigory Alexandrov. There was the closest co-operation between the composer Isaak Dunayevsky and the director Grigory Alexandrov (*The Circus*, *Jolly Fellows* and others), and between Sergei Prokofiev and Sergei Eisenstein. In the latter instance the joint work of composer and director determined not only the character of the music for the films but also the appearance of certain devices in other forms of music—in opera and even in symphony. The montage principle of form construction utilised by Prokofiev in his incidental score for Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* has indisputably influenced the dramaturgy of Prokofiev's subsequent operas and symphonies.

The producer of *Ivan the Terrible*, on the

other hand, has admitted that the composer has time and again influenced the process of film-making, of the film's style and montage. "Prokofiev and I always haggle over the question of 'who is to be the first', in other words, whether the music should be written from the separate sequences and the montage done according to the music, or whether a whole scene should be edited first and the music for it written afterwards. We haggle because the one who is 'first' has the hardest job to do to create the rhythmic progression of the scene. The second one 'has it easy'."¹¹

We see from the words of the great director that the composer actively influenced the dramaturgy of the film and thus was its rightful co-author.

The successes of the interpretative art, too, were an important factor of the Soviet musical scene in the thirties. It was in those years that the galaxy of brilliant Soviet instrumentalists—David Oistrakh, Lev Oborin, Svyatoslav Knushevitsky and Daniil Shafran—came to the fore while the operatic stage was graced by the names of Valeria Barsova, Ivan Kozlovsky, Mark Reizen, Alexander Pirogov and many others. The performers' achievements ensuring their world recognition influenced musical creativity in their turn: thus Aram Khachaturyan's piano and violin concertos were to a certain extent called to life by their first interpreters Lev Oborin and David Oistrakh to whom the works are dedicated; the singers Alexander Pirogov and Maria Maksakova gave many valuable hints to Marian Koval when he worked on his opera *Yemelyan Pugachev*.

We have had occasion to note the significance of Shostakovich's three symphonies; along with Myaskovsky's Twenty-First Symphony they

proved the first truly philosophical works of Soviet symphonism. Though essentially lyrical, these works had nothing of subjectivism about them, nothing to make them remote from society's interests: on the contrary, they were remarkable for their public spirit. That was genuinely philosophical lyricism in symphonic music, with violent clashes and struggles, sometimes even with a touch of tragedy (the Fourth and Sixth symphonies by Shostakovich), presenting a vast panorama of life on a global scale, interpreted in the humanitarian spirit.

Works of this type were supplemented by others, equally appealing, for instance, Aram Khachaturyan's world-famous piano and violin concertos, with their day-dreams and optimistic approach to life, and Tikhon Khrennikov's First Symphony, which, significantly enough, have been preserved in the world concert repertoire to this day.

The emotional wealth of man in socialist society, the harmonious combination in his spiritual make-up of most varied feelings, from wrath to pure joy, reflected in the works of Soviet composers, gave them an advantage over the works of certain Western composers, which, though forceful and impressive, were only too often permeated with negative feelings and emotions to the exclusion of everything else.

It would be wrong to picture the state of Soviet music in the thirties as a kind of idyll. Now and again, especially at the end of the decade, the smooth course of musical development was ruffled by frontal attacks in the press or at discussions by critics holding strait-laced views. Some works were overpraised while others were undeservedly denounced. This happened to two operas written

approximately at one and the same time, Ivan Dzerzhinsky's *And Quiet Flows the Don* and Dmitry Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. The former was praised to the skies, far beyond its merits, and—which was just *too bad*—proclaimed a kind of aesthetic norm, while the latter had to await repeat performances for a whole quarter of a century. The criticism levelled at Shostakovich's ballet *Limpid Stream* was better founded, but the trend towards fixing rigid norms, which was growing stronger and stronger, soon put beyond the pale all ballets based on the principle of dance divertissement: the only kind of ballet that was permitted to exist was ballet-pantomime on a "topical" subject.

If the music of some stage work or other was unusual, if it did not wholly conform to tradition, the scenic history of such works was greatly complicated. This happened to Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. It should not be understood that the ballet was proscribed "from above"—indeed, such was not the case; the dancers were at first unwilling to dance to this music, the same dancers who later won fame as its interpreters. The fears that a work might prove "too high-brow" for the broad audiences, that its music might prove beyond them, were the result of the implementation of aesthetic norms that began to constitute a danger to art.

Fortunately, although restricting to a certain extent the scope of creative searchings, these tendencies manifesting themselves, among other things, in affording monopoly to "song-operas", were not entirely predominant in practice. Soviet art went on developing successfully in a variety of ways.

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the West (hatred of fascism, the upsurge of patriotic feelings, etc.), but there also was much that was different (the devastation caused by the war, the resistance to the foe on the Soviet soil were experienced rather as a collective feeling common to all). The basic principles which united society, including creative artists, were also different: the motive force of social life in the Soviet Union was the friendship of the fraternal peoples. That emotional atmosphere remained a determining factor throughout the tragic years of the war. Topics associated with the nation's resistance to the enemy were characteristic of the Soviet symphonies composed at the time. This was especially true of the finales with their resolute and vigorous "resistance" themes usually developed contrapuntally and creating the effect of a people gathering its forces (cf. the numerous fugues and fugatos in the Twenty-Fourth Symphony by Myaskovsky, in the Second Symphony by Gavriil Popov and, treated somewhat differently, in Shostakovich's Eighth and Iyatoshinsky's Third symphonies). This imagery was also present in the original episodes of war dances of Khachaturyan's and Muradeli's symphonies where, thanks to the introduction of new expressive means such as muted trumpets, drum beats, etc., the music was shifted to the realm of weird and menacing images associated with the enemy on the one hand or expressed the energy of the fighting people in tempestuous folk dances, on the other. In this way was presented tangibly "war" imagery creating an atmosphere of conflict within the limits of an integral form—the dance—easily comprehensible to the people. That imagery, besides, was susceptible of changed meaning. The might of the people and the coming victory were

the fight against aggression was heard at the climaxes of many of the symphonies.

All this endeared Soviet war-time symphonic music to both Soviet audiences and to millions of people the world over. The idea of fight against the anti-humanistic elements, the destroyers of culture, the oppressors of the individual, and the assertion of lofty humanistic and national ideals, cherished equally by individuals and by society as a whole, evoked a ready response in the hearts of millions making them experience the music as their own.

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The war theme has persisted in Soviet music ever since the victory over Hitlerism. Those trying times are recalled over and over again in works written after 1945, presented in fresh images and treated from new emotional aspects as viewed by men living in the fifties and the sixties. Today, the sinister shapes of new conflicts loom before us, and mankind is forced to wage an incessant fight for peace. Need it be said that modern Euterpe touring the world without visas plays a role of no small importance in this fight. The anti-war spirit pervades such works as Prokofiev's Sixth Symphony and opera *War and Peace*, Shostakovich's Ninth and Tenth symphonies and Kabalevsky's opera *The Taras Family*.

The battle and mourning episodes from the first movement of Prokofiev's Sixth Symphony and particularly the ominous fade-in in the merry carnival music of its Finale are graphic examples of the musical interpretation of Julius Fučík's appeal: "People, be on your guard!", occurring in works of those years. In explaining the unexpected appearance of the battle episode at the end

of his symphony Prokofiev said: "Those are unhealed wounds . . . they must not be forgotten." Similar ideas come to mind at hearing the menacing whirlwind in the second movement of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, the epic and austere theme of the popular calamity in Prokofiev's *War and Peace* and the monologue of old Taras in Kabalevsky's opera.

Indeed, making people remember the horrible years of the war, the pain of bleeding wounds help them to safeguard peace. The prominent Soviet author Konstantin Fedin was quite right when he said in 1965 that "wiping off all memory of the past war is one of the aims of those who are preparing a new one".

The civic conscience of Soviet artists, their heartfelt anxiety for the destinies of the world have repeatedly urged them to return again and again to the war theme, one of the acutest issues of our age.

Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony written immediately upon the end of the war is characteristic in this respect. Essentially optimistic in its general mood, brilliantly written and bubbling with humour, this work is not free from anxiety, from disquieting recollections, particularly in its third and fourth movements, as is clear from the lugubrious chorale and the long sorrowful solo of the bassoon. His Tenth Symphony, besides the infernal whirlwind of the second movement, contains profound meditations on life in the celebrated contemplative *Adagio*. That meditation is intensely personal, which makes the symphony profoundly human. It is not by chance that the composer uses here his musical initials (the German names of notes) *D, S* (i.e., *E-flat*), *C, H* (i.e., *B*), that is, *Dmitry Schostakovich*, subsequently

stressed in many of his works, for example, the *Violin Concerto* and the *Eighth Quartet*.

Inevitably, the psychological work, the soul, if you like, of man in socialist society manifests itself in a unique personality which is at the same time inseparably linked up with society as a whole. However great the importance of the individual, however unique the feelings experienced by him, the socialist world contains something that unites people spiritually, giving rise to common joys and common sorrows. This sense of collectivism is not something that exists apart from the individual, something that may be added to him from without—the "social" sense is at the same time the "individual" sense. It manifests itself differently in different people and it is a quality without which life cannot be full in the new society where the collective has become an integral part of the individual, an experience implying anxiety for the common good. That is the reason why social motives find their way into predominantly lyrical works. Without taking this into account one cannot understand many Soviet musical works on essentially personal subjects.

That may explain why some Western critics fail to appreciate the psychological wealth of Shostakovich's *Tenth Symphony*, defining its imagery as variegated and lacking unity. As Anatol Vieru, a Rumanian composer, has justly remarked, "Such definition of Shostakovich's *Tenth Symphony* is a result of observing only one, the outer, side of the work" . . .¹² without realising "how a heterogeneous musical material is welded into a highly convincing whole in the utmost depth, the fiery centre, of the music".

This heterogeneous material constitutes the new psychological lyricism permeating Shostako-

vich's Tenth Symphony, a lyricism that is a multiple reflection, an interpenetration, a fusion of elements from social life at large, of meditations on mankind's future and of purely personal elements exploring the deepest recesses of the most intimate experiences. In this sense it is a typically Shostakovich work.

Like Bartók, Honegger, Hindemith, Stravinsky, Orff and other leading composers in the West, Soviet composers, especially during the past ten years, have begun to introduce into the sphere of personal experiences elements of folk art and certain devices borrowed from classical music, baroque music and from Bach. These elements have in the course of time acquired, like antique imagery, a generalised meaning and today are associated with the wise eternal principles of human life. It is precisely in this sense that Soviet music employs neo-classical devices. They are in evidence in the "Bach-like" meditations of the slow movements from Shostakovich's works, particularly his celebrated *Passacaglias* (*Katerina Izmailova*, Eighth Symphony, Trio, Violin Concerto and some others) and in the perky "Haydn-like" finales of some of his symphonies (Sixth and Ninth), where the early Viennese classical tradition is recalled; treated somewhat differently, these devices are encountered in the finales of some of Prokofiev's symphonies, as well as in the works of young composers, for example, Edward Mirzoyan's *Symphony for Strings and Percussions*. Incidentally, this is one more proof of the organic ties between Soviet music and the most important traditions of universal human culture, an example of its ability to select all that is worthy of note, all that is lasting and capable of expressing a new content in a renovated form.

Myaskovsky's Twenty-Seventh Symphony (his last) was performed for the first time in December 1957, four months after the composer's death. Two years later Prokofiev's swan song, his Seventh Symphony, had its première. These are two of the most remarkable works of Soviet music, presenting different aspects of human emotions and filled with the joy and beauty of life. Although no special effort has been made to make them accessible to the broad audiences (for instance, they contain no song quotations), nevertheless these symphonies are truly popular works in spirit. They show the importance of this form for Soviet music, a form which, as I have had occasion to mention earlier, many Western musicians would gladly have discarded as a genre that has outlived itself in the twentieth century. Just as Shostakovich's Tenth, the two symphonies lack pronounced expressiveness and acute collisions, their music being more objective, restrained and marked by wise directness. These peculiarities can perhaps be explained by the specific nature of the two works: these are symphonies-recollections, written at the crucial moment of looking back upon one's life before taking leave of it. The composer is lost in meditation (Myaskovsky), ponders deeply on his country's destinies and calls to mind pictures from his childhood and youth (Prokofiev).

Myaskovsky's symphony is predominantly lyro-epic, while Prokofiev's work is purely lyrical, luxuriating in contemplation. The return of the exalted lyrical theme from the first movement at the very end of Prokofiev's symphony rings as a sum-total, a symbol, a hymn to life. The bridge thus thrown between the first movement and the *Finale* emphasises the oneness of the work breath-

ing the warmest humanism and illuminated with life's daylight.

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The Decision of the Central Committee of the CPSU on music, passed in 1948, remains to this day a target for attacks on the part of Western historians and publicists. Some of their criticisms are just, but they also bear a responsibility for quite a few fabrications. This problem, therefore, deserves to be discussed at some length.

The guiding idea of the Decision on Vano Muradeli's Opera *A Great Friendship*, which was passed a little more than two decades ago, is basically sound. This applies, in the first place, to the assertion that socialist art should be intimately connected with the people. It is quite natural that in conditions of a democratic, socialist state the artist cannot keep aloof from his audiences, from the people. Symptoms of this aloofness are causing anxiety to many progressive minds in the West. Confining creative efforts to one's ego or to a small handful of like-minded admirers is entirely out of place in a society founded on strictly democratic principles. The Party's call to democratism in creative work, to communion with the people, to establishing contacts with the audiences and, last but not least, to cultivating a greater variety of forms was, therefore, all the more justified because there were in evidence signs of certain departure from these principles. These signs had been noted and discussed at the Plenary Session of the Union of Soviet Composers held in 1947, that is, a year before the Decision was issued.

But the essentially correct guiding idea of that Party document, as it happened now and again

in those times, was stated in imperative terms with a markedly subjective colouring and—which is the most important—criticism was levelled at certain persons and certain musical works many of which had no traces of the shortcomings criticised.

To begin with, Muradeli's opera (certainly no masterpiece) was entirely free from formalism, and its mention in the text and even in the heading of the Decision was due to purely subjective reasons which had nothing to do with music. The Decision contained unjust generalisations in regard to the work of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky and some other composers. The inaccuracies in the concrete application of the Decision's idea (which was correct in principle) limited the idea, robbed it of its meaning and consequently distorted it. The criterion of accessibility boiled down to vocal and "topical" programmatic music, while the audience was reduced to one section of it, the mass audience.

The Central Committee of the CPSU introduced the necessary corrections by its special Decision of 1958, freeing from undeserved accusations the composers mentioned in the earlier Decision. The harm which musical art experienced during the decade 1948-58 was due not so much to the Decision as to the atmosphere that had arisen round it.

Still there are no real grounds for the fabrications that used to appear—and are appearing to this day—in Western papers, magazines and even more fundamental publications such as books on the history of music, encyclopedias and so on. The fabrications assert, for example, that certain musical works were prohibited, that Zhdanov, "himself at the piano, had lectured to

these devices that lend a touch of modernity to the works of both composers, rooted as they are in the national musical idiom. Other musical forms, too, were enriched by the principle of symphonism. This principle was responsible for the appearance, as early as the thirties, of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* and Khachaturyan's *Gayaneh*, two ballets constituting the pride of Soviet music. They deservedly occupy a leading place in the repertoires of world opera houses, exerting a beneficent influence on the development of that form. A remarkable feature of these works is that their novel melos and splendidly fresh and rich dramaturgy have made it possible to renovate choreography as well.

Those years brought signal successes to numerous Soviet dance and song companies, among them the world-famous Moiseyev Dance Company and the *Beryozka*. A special kind of music was composed for the ensembles, based on the principles of folk music-making, but aesthetically perfected.

After the First USSR Congress of Soviet Composers and upon revival of the reviews of national art in the post-war years, music in the non-Russian republics received a fresh impetus: national schools of composition were founded and representatives of a new generation of composers came to the fore.

In the RSFSR, they were the brilliantly gifted Gherman Galynin whose first significant work was his Epic Poem, Boris Chaikovsky, with his refreshingly novel *Sinfonietta*, Moisei Weinberg, a consummate master of fine lyrical moods and, somewhat later, Rodion Shchedrin (*Piano Concreto*, *The Hump-Backed Horse* ballet, and the First Symphony), Andrei Eshpai, a Mari by

nationality (Piano Concerto, First Symphony and Hungarian Tunes for violin and orchestra).

In Georgia the new generation was represented in the fifties by Otar Taktakishvili, an excellent master of choral and symphonic writing, with two symphonies, a piano concerto and oratorios to his credit, and Sulkhan Tsintsadze whose forte is instrumental miniatures (string quartets).

Armenia developed a strong school of composition advancing from its midst composer-pianist Arno Babajanyan (a romantically impassioned "Heroic Ballade" for piano and orchestra, stirringly melodious songs and an inspired trio). Alexander Arutyunyan whose first important composition was "Cantata about Motherland", one of the best works in that form in Soviet music, combining the elaborate rhythmic patterns of Armenian national dances and ornate melodies with a high standard of professionalism.

Azerbaijan produced that splendid symphonist, Kara Karayev, a pupil of Shostakovich, well known abroad, the author of two ballets (*Seven Beauties* and *Leili and Mejnun*), three symphonies and a large number of symphonic suites. His young colleague, Fikret Amirov, had won fame as a folk musician in his youth. His profound knowledge of folk instruments enabled him, upon graduation from the Conservatoire, to compose the wonderful "Symphonic Maqams", a unique instance of symphonisation of Azerbaijan folk epic songs, which carried away Western audiences by their novel sonorities resulting from the original folk modes embodied in resplendent colours of modern symphony orchestra. The "Maqams" have been performed almost in all countries of Europe and America. Amirov is also

the author of *Spartak*, one of the best Aerobics spectacles on a modern subject.

The ranks of Ukrainian composers, headed by Lev Kavayly and Boris Levtchenko, were reinforced by Julian Mints, Konstantin Dankevich and, later, Georgy Mikhaylov and Andrei Miroshnikov, who have enriched Soviet music with a number of operas and other major works.

In Latvia the talent of Janis Lazovs reached full maturity.

In Estonia Gustav Ernesaks and Eugen Kapp were joined by a whole group of younger composers such as Eino Tamberg, Arvo Part, Jaan Räisi, Jaan Koba, Veljo Tormis, Heino Jürišala, representing what may be considered the most radical trend in Soviet music. It was here that new forms such as concerto for chamber orchestra, opera-ballet and jazz-concerto began to be cultivated assiduously. Naturally, not all of these searchings have been equally successful, but in general they are interesting and fruitful, and deserve encouragement as youthful daring should. It would be in place to remark here that the intense creative work and the appearance of new generations of talented composers in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania show the successful development of the Baltic peoples' culture under socialism.

Mention should also be made of Mukhan Tulebayev, a talented Kazakh composer who, unfortunately, died at an early age, and the Turkmen Veli Mukhatov. These two names are all the more remarkable because they belong to professional composers of the nationalities which in former times had no professional music in the accepted sense of the term: the Kazakhs and

charities. For instance, Rodion Shchedrin composed his "Chimes" on commission from a French orchestra and Alfred Schnittke wrote his Second Concerto for Symphony Orchestra for the Finnish Radio.

The Union of Composers' Record Library collects the recordings of foreign musical novelties, and any one can listen to them in special studios. The concert and opera-house repertoire is expanding to include works by Benjamin Britten, Carl Orff, Francis Poulenc, Stravinsky, Schönberg, Berg, Webern, Boulez and Lutosławski.

Our composers show an increasing interest in experiment: thus, serial techniques and aleatorics are resorted to by Edison Denisov (for example, *The Sun of the Incas*), Arvo Pärt (*A Necrologue*, *Polyphonic Symphony*), Sergei Slonimsky (*Vocal Cycle*, *Concerto Buffo*), Boris Tishchenko (*Third Symphony* and some other works), Alfred Schnittke (*Dialogue for Seven Instruments*, *Violin Concerto*), Andrei Volkonsky (*The Laments of Shehaza*), and their experimental works have been extensively represented at international festivals, for instance, the Zagreb Festival and the Warsaw Autumn Festival. Nevertheless, some newspapermen in the West persist in telling their public that such works are either ignored or downright banned in our country. Let us go deeper into the matter.

True, the works using the techniques characteristic of modern Western music are not often performed before large audiences. To a certain extent this is due to the lack of initiative on the part of our concert-giving bodies. But only to a limited extent. The authors of the "exposures" in the press are incapable of comprehend-

avant-garde operas have turned forty. But there is no sense in presenting an opera to an empty auditorium."

Yes, Nonolka is right: one of the leading radical trends in music, the one based on serial dodecaphony, has long ago passed the four-decade mark, yet it has failed to win popular recognition and nobody knows whether it will be coming at all. For the time being, however, works of this kind are usually performed to empty seats shortly after their premières.

The gist of the matter, probably, is that you cannot insist on uniformity in experiment, for then it ceases to be experiment in the sense of searchings in most varied directions, including tonal music. That there still is much to discover in, say, the wealth of folk-lore modes is proved by the work of such composers as Georgi Sviridov (take, for example, his *Kursk Songs* and *Triptych*) and Nodar Gabunia whose *Fable* was recently enthusiastically acclaimed by French audiences. Our music-lovers in their turn hold in high esteem the music of Britten and Orff, each of whom develops further the folk tradition by the technical means at the command of twentieth-century art, without, however, departing from the foundations of tonal music. There hardly can be any doubt that the modal essence of musical thinking—the principle of contrast between tonal complexes implying motion and those implying repose, which is the foundation of musical dramaturgy and development—is the reflection in man's consciousness of life's dialectic pairs (motion—repouse, heat—cold, excitement—tranquillity, etc.). So, while there is life and while its laws are in force, tonality may be expected to remain natural and necessary. Whereas the forms

and the manner, in which the modal contradiction manifests itself, change in the course of history, the dialectic principle of modal and harmonic motion and repose will remain because it appeals to the human ear perceiving it as one of the most important and natural methods of reflecting life's phenomena in general and of artistic thinking in particular. We find in Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* an interesting entry: "Plato in his *Symposium* puts forward the views of Heraclitus (inter alia in their application to music: harmony consists of opposites), and the statement: 'The art of the musician unites the different'."¹⁶

Is it not for that reason that composers today are increasingly cultivating "mixed" systems, combining tonality with atonality, which is a return to the age-old principle of motion versus repose, presented in a new guise? Our composers, too, make use of this method, for instance, Rодион Шchedrin in his Preludes and Fugues and *The Chimes*, Sergei Slonimsky (Sonatas, the opera *Urineya. A Voice from the Chorus*), Andrei Eshpai and other composers.

As a general rule, the atonal, sonoristic system can only serve as a basis for individual episodes (expressive in their own way), but not for entire large-scale compositions which demand a consistent conflicting motion—development.

Besides, as is shown by practical experience, atonal music ousts the national element almost completely. But can we in our country, where the vital process of the establishment and development of professional musical cultures of many peoples is in progress, advocate a system which is at crying variance with the time-hallowed system of popular creative thinking? This is a point which many of our friends in the West fail

to grasp, for they are convinced that new revolutionary, socialist ("Left") ideas must of necessity involve a "Left" (revolutionary) idiom. The "revolution" of the musical whom, as has been noted above, is for some unknown reason accepted only if fitting the Procrustean bed of a narrow trend originating in the Neo-Viennese School.

There is no disputing the idea that the calling of an artist in socialist society entails many obligations. The first of these is contact with the democratic audiences, based on the principle of inherited artistic traditions, for a society projected into the future must respect all that mankind has accumulated for its use in the sphere of culture. Otherwise history would never forgive it its carelessness and nihilism, and would deprive it of the right to represent the latest stage in the world historical process.

A noteworthy feature of the Western musical scene today is polarisation of musical tastes, with the so-called "intellectual" music existing for a very limited musical *élite* at the one pole and the realm of hit songs, the wide stream of commercialised and standardised productions catering for the basest musical tastes, at the other. This state of things is not accidental, one of its causes being the theory that art exists for the select few; this theory, advocated by certain strata of intellectuals (not by all, of course), holds that the mass audiences are inherently incapable of comprehending "real" (intellectual) great music. Hence annual music festivals for snobs at the one pole and the torrent of thoughtless standardised pieces on the concert stage and on gramophone records, at the other.

Can this happen in our socialist society? No,

it would be a negation of its basic ethical and aesthetic principles which are irreconcilably opposed to the theory of "art for the select few".

Sergei Prokofiev stated this idea in no uncertain terms as far back as the latter half of the thirties when he decided to return for good to his native country: "This is no time for composing for a tiny group of aesthetes. Today the broadest strata of the people stand facing great music expectantly. Composers, please pay particular attention to this. If you drive the people away, they will leave you for jazz or for tearful trash like the song 'Marusya Has Taken Poison'....¹⁵ But if you succeed in attracting them you will have an audience the like of which has not been known at any time anywhere. It does not follow from this, however, that you should play down to this audience. Playing down always contains a trace of insincerity."¹⁶ How very significant is this appeal to his colleagues on the part of a world-famous composer! How well he has sensed the democratic spirit of socialist society! Somewhere else Prokofiev expressed a very important idea that an artist must combine the essential democratism of his music with his own creative searchings, striving for "a new kind of simplicity, a new kind of clarity", as he put it. Therefore, the other side of the problem, new creative searchings, is no less important.

This is where the culture of a new society advancing novel ideas must be in the lead. For this reason socialist art is entitled to creative experiment more than any other. For this reason all attempts to bar the way to experiment under the pretext of universal accessibility of art are unjustifiable.

The correct answer seems to be that experi-

must think present along the high road of artistic development and not substitute it. Art cannot cease functioning in order to get itself regenerated by undergo "thorough repair". It is not because humanity needs it every day, nor rather every moment of its existence, since art is humanity's greatest helper inspiring and bestowing life.

But there are experiments and experiments. The exact nature of the experiment is not subject to regulation. A great talent will always find his own way for realization, for creating art and creating that new which is always unexpected and unpredictable, inseparable from true aesthetic pleasure. On the other hand, we think that there are results in experiment that lead nowhere, that will never result in anything which may become comprehensible to broad audiences even in the remote future. These are usually rationalistic ways, cold searchings of the brain and of artificial calculations unwarmed by emotion.

We used to have such experiments in the twenties. For instance, pieces for "musical rhythmo-declamation" were composed at that time, in which one group of performers uttered "r-r-r-r-r-", while another screamed "ee-ee-ee-ee-", or where voices were made to imitate bell-tinging, etc.; in his opera *Ice and Steel* Deshevov made use of the twelve-tone series (incidentally, long before Klenek wrote his *Karl V* which Western musical historians proclaim the first dodecaphonous opera). As is well known, the first electronic instrument, the *termentor*, was constructed in the Soviet Union by the engineer Lev Termen, known abroad as Leon Theremen, who was subsequently followed by a number of other inventors. For all their original-

ity, these experiments were, naturally, not enough to embody the great ideas of the Revolution and to express the wealth of emotions of the new man. Probably it was for that reason that they were soon forgotten. True art is primarily a special type of human thinking and feeling, therefore even the most startling of coloristic finds cannot in themselves be regarded as art. This may be the reason why electronic and concrete music, so publicised at modern music festivals, having achieved some indisputably interesting sound effects, has for a number of years been marking time since it is devoid of art's most important characteristic—the dynamic thinking in imagery, a system of development. Will it be able to secure it in the future?

This is why the specialised studios of electronic instruments and even concert ensembles of this type, which exist in the USSR, are being utilised mainly for the purpose of supplying applied music to films, the theatre and, sometimes, for producing purely coloristic effects in the scores of extended compositions—and no more. One cannot tell, however; perhaps the "phonics", too, will eventually give rise to imagery and a special kind of musical thinking: a genius is capable of anything, and time will show. So far the use of that sort of music in our country is strictly localised.

Karl Marx has formulated the basic ideas concerning the interrelationships between art and the broad audiences (or spectators) in the following words: "An *objet d'art* creates a public that has artistic taste and is able to enjoy beauty—and the same can be said of any other product."¹⁷ In tsarist Russia the public that understood art numbered mere thousands. In our multi-national

socialist country the public numbers many thousands. This is proved by the intensive activities of the musical theatres (of which we have nearly 50) which are filled to capacity every night of the year; this is proved by the attendance at the hundreds of concerts given daily in all kinds of auditoria—not only in concert halls but also in numerous Palaces of Culture, workers' and peasants' clubs and so on. For all that, the problem of expanding our audiences still remains outstanding if we are to realise Lenin's behest. The creative fire must be set afame in the soul of each builder of communist society. Only that new society, having abolished classes and increasingly reducing the differences between mental and manual work, between city and village, and between various strata of society (those that have reached the heights of culture and those that are still lagging behind) will be able to create conditions necessary to make lofty culture, including music, the property of the entire people.

As has already been stated, our new society has done quite a lot to achieve this. We may remind our readers of the hundreds of music schools attended by great numbers of children whose parents pay very low fees, of the special types of schools for particularly gifted children, where general subjects are taught and where children from all parts of the country are accommodated in hostels. These schools, veritable hot-beds of talent preparing children for admission to the country's leading conservatoires, have, by the way, fostered many outstanding musicians. We may remind our readers of the system of People's Universities of Music running concert-lectures both in large cities and small towns, of

the special cycles of lectures on music given over the air and on the TV, such lectures being transmitted not by one channel only (as is the rule abroad) but given daily on the network of all main radio and television stations.

Our foreign visitors are well aware that in the USSR gramophone records are the lowest-priced in the world. Here, the price of a record of serious music or a concert-lecture is half that of a fashionable hit song: although the Melodia recording firm incurs greater expenses to record a serious musical work, in the USSR profit is not the almighty factor it is elsewhere. Recordings of light music, too, are controlled by special commissions and councils consisting of the country's leading musicians, so our shops do not as a rule sell recordings of banal, inartistic "opuses".

Does this mean that everything is being done in our country to educate good taste in music? Does this mean that everybody loves and appreciates good music, that everybody's taste is impeccable? Alas, such is not the case. We have many shortcomings, particularly in mass music education, in the tastes of our young people some of whom limit their musical diet to cheap hit numbers recorded on tape. Here, too (alas!), you may come across a youth carrying a portable radio which floods with deafening sounds an area of many square yards. Here, too, you may come across people who cannot tell Chopin from Beethoven, or who derive no aesthetic pleasure from a symphony by Shostakovich.

As yet we do not pay enough attention to studying the popular taste, to the sociology of music, which is an unpardonable sin for our society. We have mentioned elsewhere that there is a danger of a gap forming between the "music

for the masses" composed sometimes with low aesthetic standards in view and the "music for the few" which now and again shows a tendency to subjectiveness and aloofness. In a word, there is still much to be done. And if we bear in mind that our country's population exceeds two hundred millions, the magnitude and difficulty of the task becomes quite apparent.

Music has an important part to play in educating the harmoniously developed personality, in fulfilling that lofty aim which life sets the new society. That is because music, penetrating all aspects of everyday life, closely associated with the rich and varied world of *human emotions*, is capable of ennobling man as it exercises its influence through his feelings.

That is probably why, at the dawn of our society's development, Lenin wrote those significant words "State-sponsored musical development", which at once lifted music to a high social plane. That is why, all difficulties and hardships notwithstanding, socialist society showed at various stages of its development its solicitude for the growth of mass musical culture in the country, ranging from prices of admittance to theatres and concerts to subsidising the Universities of Culture and expanding the network of music schools.

However, things are not limited to state enactments. The overwhelming majority of our cultural workers are convinced that, along with other arts, music must exert a very strong influence on the development of people in new society. But to accomplish this, it must possess a high ideological content and should be addressed mainly to the mass audience. Music can be made truly popular first of all through lifting the broad

Art is not an enigmatic sphynx but a great spiritual force of democratic society, the image of the most vital and burning phenomena of reality, arousing in people noble emotions, educating them harmoniously and enabling society to express in the most forceful way its hatred of life's evils and to experience its joys all the more poignantly. These considerations serve as an inspiration to most of the Soviet musicians in their work.

¹ *U. I. Lenin on Literature and Art*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1967, p. 663.

² Quoted from the *Materials and Documents on the History of Russian Soviet Theatre*, Russ. ed., Vol. I

³ *History of Soviet Theatre*, p. 263.

⁴ *U. I. Lenin on Literature and Art*, Russ. ed., p. 574

⁵ V. Bonch-Bruyevich, *U. I. Lenin in Petrograd and Moscow (1917-1920)*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1956, pp. 36-37

⁶ The fact that just then—in the first post-revolutionary years—Yelena Malinovskaya, the Bolshoi Theatre's first Soviet director, acting on Anatoly Lunacharsky's advice enlisted the services of the famous producer Konstantin Stanislavsky, seems one more proof of the desire to strengthen the realist trend at the Bolshoi Theatre.

⁷ The sounds and rhythms of the modern city, naturally have exerted a considerable influence on musical rhythms, for music is usually the first of the arts to reflect changes occurring in society's way of life.

⁸ Academician Boris Asafyev's profoundly materialistic theory of musical language consists in regarding the intonations predominantly occurring at a given historical phase (the common speech intonations, the melodic

elements of folk music and so on) as the realist basis of music.

- * Of course this in no way detracts from the importance of vocal-symphonic forms existing parallel to symphonies.
- * It is well known that utilisation of Oriental musical material is an established tradition of classical Russian music: suffice it to mention Rimsky-Korsakov, Balakirev, Moussorgsky and Taneyev. Many of the composers visited the Caucasus and Central Asia where they recorded folk tunes, subsequently used for musical works that gained world renown.
- ¹¹ S. Prokofiev, *Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1950, p. 257.
- ¹² Soviet Music No. 1, 1963, p. 113.
- ¹³ Musica No. 3, 1964.
- ¹⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 58, p. 262.
- ¹⁵ A popular "tearful" hit song of pre-revolutionary years.
- ¹⁶ Quoted from S. Morozov, *Prokofiev* (in Russian), 1967, p. 192.
- ¹⁷ K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow, 1971, p. 197.
- ¹⁸ Since art is in constant motion, the renovation of its expressive media will, probably, always cause a temporary breach of contact between the artist and his public.



G. NEDOSHIYIN **Creative Search**
in Soviet Fine Arts

Soviet fine arts, by virtue of its aesthetic principles and the logic of its historical development, its vitality, wealth of talent and creative potential, and the way it combines clearly defined ideals with ceaseless experiment and exploration of new forms and expressive means, represents an important and highly original phenomenon in the arts of the 20th century.

Soviet fine arts has received comparatively little attention abroad, far less than our music, literature, cinema or theatre, and many curious myths are current. The widespread view persists, even in the works of art specialists, that socialist realism demands edifying genre compositions executed in the manner of academic naturalism of the latter half of the 19th century. The names of many artists—including some of the most outstanding—are completely unknown, and whole periods in the development of Soviet art are a real *terra incognita*.

There are many reasons for this, some of them lying well outside the sphere of art. We do not propose to examine them here. However, one point directly deriving from the specific development of Soviet art must be mentioned as having an important bearing on our subject.

This is the fact that the general course of development of Soviet fine arts over the fifty years of its existence has been radically different from that of contemporary art in the West. This is not to suggest that they have had nothing at all

in common there have been many fruitful contacts and both owe each other a great deal, and it is possible to point to numerous similarities and parallels. However, the historical periods and the corresponding means of expression have been vastly different. In what exactly these differences consist, we shall attempt to show further on. Suffice it to mention here that in Soviet fine art, as in other spheres of Soviet culture, the central issues have been art's connection with the life of the masses and the major social problems being resolved at each particular stage and, consequently, the question of realism.

These basic tendencies in the subject-matter of art can be approached from various angles. But it is essential to be objective, and realize that here we have to do not with the imposition of categorical demands on art from outside its realm but with specific sociological artistic situations. In this connection we might recall (without attempting to make any comparison of "absolute" artistic value or to liken the content of the relative situations) that the art of classical Greece or France between 1789 and 1815 was no less "civic", and that the realist trend was equally strong and decisive in the art of the Italian Quattrocento and 17th-century Holland.

The sociological relationship between art and society varies according to the historical context, and it is quite wrong to use the criteria that apply to 20th-century Western art in judging Soviet art. Not only did they develop in radically different social conditions, but the relationship between the artist's perception and society was also vastly different. The elitist spirit, which in the West fed not only various forms of aesthetic

escapism but even those movements that represented a subjective protest against the bourgeois way of life, has always been completely alien to Soviet art.

There are thus important historical factors underlying the difference between Soviet and Western art. Soviet art was born of the October Revolution and emerged and developed as an organic part of socialist culture.

It may be that the fine arts have developed less successfully than other spheres of Soviet culture, that the Muse of Art has been less fecund than the Muse of Poetry or the Muse of the Cinema. But no history of twentieth-century painting with any claim to objectivity can avoid mentioning such names as Nesterov and S. Gerasimov, Korin and Saryan, Mashkov and Konchalovsky, Ioganson and Deineka. The same applies to the history of sculpture—viz., Matveyev and Shadr, Mukhina and Lebedeva, or the history of graphic art—viz., Favorsky and Kravchenko, Moor and Lebedev. This is simply mentioning those names which have indisputably gone down in the history of art.

Thus, Soviet art must be understood and judged according to the logic of its own development, without interpreting its failure to conform to other, alien principles as shortcomings.

Let us take a look now at the development of Soviet fine arts over the fifty years of its history, and see what artists were trying to do and to what extent they succeeded, what laws governed its development and what conclusions we are already in a position to draw.

First of all, we should take a look at the sociological aspect.

After the October Revolution, the question of

bringing to the masses all the spiritual values produced in the past and being created at the moment became a problem of burning actuality. Lenin formulated the plan of operations of the cultural revolution with brilliant consciousness and clarity: art should be brought closer to the masses and vice versa.¹

The task was a tremendous one as regards culture in general, and there were special difficulties to be faced in the case of fine arts. For surely no sphere of professional art was so far removed from the aesthetic demands of the masses at the beginning of this century as painting, sculpture and graphic art. From the eighteenth century onwards in Russia there had been a wide and growing divorce between the visual plastic arts of the masses and what we might term "intellectual" art, what Lev Tolstoi, sharply aware of the historical antagonism that had developed, disdainfully referred to as "an upper class pastime". As a result, tremendous educational work was required if the masses were to be brought closer to art, involving special efforts to produce a taste for painting and sculpture.

As for the other half of the problem—bringing art closer to the masses—the "artistic revolution" involved a particularly comprehensive "reshuffle" in the fine arts, where on the one hand the representatives of one of the most important artistic movements of the turn of the century, the World of Art group (Alexander Benois, Bakst, Rerikh, Dobuzhinsky) remained convinced traditionalists and jealous guardians of the classical heritage, for all their aristocratic aestheticism, while on the other hand the younger generation of artists (Goncharova and Larionov, Yakulov and Tatlin, Malevich and Kan-

dinsky) were out-and-out rebels, who rejected all the established canons of academic art. Never had there been such a sharp break with tradition, such open flouting of accepted principles. Never before had there been such a whirlwind of change in the world of art, such iconoclasm and such a "devaluation of values". The result of all this was the development of various elitist programmes, art intended for "the chosen few", for the initiated. Indeed, the avant-garde artists were often incomprehensible even to most of the anyway relatively small art public, and had chosen to remain in social isolation.

This isolation, or rather self-insulation of art had to be overcome. And it must be said that many avant-garde artists, once they had joined in the work of creating a new culture, made determined efforts to find contact with revolutionary reality. There was naturally a great deal in their explorations that was naively utopian and fantastic, for they subscribed to the most diverse aesthetic and social illusions. There were more creative impulses than finished artistic products. Nevertheless, it must be realised that the Soviet artists of the so-called Left Front group were above all concerned with creating an art organically fused with life and making a militant appeal to the masses. This is the basic difference in the respective courses of development of Soviet and Western "avant-garde" art in the early twenties.

Mayakovsky the poet, who was also a talented artist, Lebedev, Cheremnykh, Lisitsky and Rodchenko produced political posters and propaganda prints. Sterenberg threw himself enthusiastically into organisational work. Tatlin worked on his fantastic Monument of the Third Intern-

national and later, together with Malevich, Popova, Stepanova and others, went into art designing.

But the avant-garde artists, with their bold experiments, noisy polemics and artistic results that were far from always successful, were not the only ones who co-operated with Soviet power. Representatives of the older generation of artists also strove to solve new socio-aesthetic problems. Among them were such champions of the traditions of 19th-century democratic realism as Katskin, Baksheyev, Arkhipov and others, the members of the World of Art group already mentioned, artists like Grabar, Kustodiev, Golovin, Lansere and Yuon, and the still young explorers of a decorative-monumental style—Petrov-Vodkin, Saryan, Krymov, Gudiashvili and the sculptor Matveyev.

The most important artistic venture in the first years after the Revolution was undoubtedly the Plan of Monumental Propaganda—the Soviet Government's plan for a series of monuments to leading revolutionaries and great men of science and the arts. The idea was first advanced by Lenin in 1918. Against the background of economic ruin, with the Civil War still raging, with the new relationship between art and society only beginning to take shape, the plan, as was only to be expected, produced slight practical results. But as a stimulus to creative initiative and in establishing firm contacts between the new government and the artists, the scheme was of inestimable value. Outstanding sculptors of all trends participated—Andreyev, Shadr, Konyonkov, Sinaisky, Merkurov, Korolyov, and others. Lenin's idea of monumental propaganda served as a kind of model of socialist relationships be-

the Revolution. The development of art proceeded accordingly.

The new stage, which lasted approximately a decade (1921-32) was characterised first and foremost by the exclusive importance given to the task of educating the masses, and hence the process of assimilation by art of the new material life presented.

Soviet art *inherited from the preceding period* a firm conviction that it was the mission of art to become a spiritual instrument of the masses, a means for developing the self-awareness of the masses. What is now known as "commitment" had none of the overtones of obedience and submission often wrongly ascribed to it today but, on the contrary, was regarded as something from which the artist derived strength which he was proud to profess. Young artists genuinely aspired to such "commitment", and the atmosphere of "public spiritedness" to which the then Commissar of Public Education Anatoly Lunacharsky referred was felt as a vital condition for truly great art.

Here we should note the tremendous role played by Lunacharsky in the emergence of Soviet art, a role that was by no means limited to his activities as People's Commissar, to merely fulfilling the function of government guidance of art. The artists knew Lunacharsky well and greatly respected him as a subtle critic and wise counsellor, willing to support all that was new, vital and fresh, and also prepared to pronounce strong words of censure whenever he felt such criticism to be necessary and useful.

The gigantic task ahead meant starting from grass-roots level. It was necessary to make the masses engaged in building socialism both the

subject and object of art. The life of the masses came to provide the main subject-matter of painting, and to a large extent, of sculpture and graphic art too. The aim was to produce art that was not only about the masses but for the masses, too, art that would speak to the masses in terms they could understand. This was what gave the art of this period its "enlightening" quality.

The quest for truth, for a deep understanding of the processes going on in society and people's minds, and the search for firmer contacts with the masses determined the significant turn towards realism that occurred in Soviet art at this period. It is noteworthy that the experiments of the avant-garde artists, sometimes entailing an orgy of subjectivist fancy, had largely made an exit during the early twenties. It is absurd to suggest that this was the result of any kind of administrative or social pressure. In its 1925 resolution on literature, calling on the writers to co-operate with Soviet power in order to create socialist art, the Communist Party stressed that it did not tie itself down to any particular formal-aesthetic programme, to any particular style. Competition was declared the chief motive force of development, competition in the solution of the practical tasks of creating a new culture advanced by the new social reality.

Let us note, in parenthesis, that in the West, too, these years saw a relative subsidence of avant-garde revolt. The social "outcasts" of yesterday reconciled themselves to the bourgeois order and took their place in the museums and authoritative studios, to eventually attain, as Kanweiler sarcastically put it, the position of "unproblematic academism."

The important difference was that in the West avant-garde art was "integrated" with capitalist society, and soon became a semi-official "establishment" style, while in the Soviet Union the social processes under way led to further exploration, this time in the direction of realism. And perhaps it was inevitable that many Soviet artists working towards realism should have begun by turning to the old traditions of 19th-century democratic realism. Thus, what some Western critics mistakenly regard as a "general law" of socialist realism was in fact dictated by the logic of historical development and represented an inevitable stage in the evolution of Soviet fine arts.

Thus, the use of the realist method was not "decreed" as the myth current in the West has it, but was simply an expression of the organic logic of aesthetic development. So it was that recent adherents of Cubism, Futurism and Neoprimitivism should have started a movement that might be described as "back to Cézanne"; or that Rodchenko, previously an abstract painter, turned to a pictorial, almost photographic idiom; and that even the father of suprematist abstract art, Malevich, in the late twenties painted some fine portraits somewhat reminiscent of the Italian Quattrocento.

There is no need for us to go into an involved discussion of the development of realism in 20th-century art. However, the fact remains that the twenties and thirties saw a general realist revival which far from declining has received fresh impulses in the post-war years (suffice it to mention Latin American art and neo-realism in Italy). Moreover, it may be safely claimed that Soviet art had an important influence on

this process, a process that can be traced back to the twenties.

Naturally, the new realist movement got under way gradually. At first it involved a great deal of naive didacticism, superficial descriptive tendencies and formal timidity, which were only gradually overcome. It must be remembered that artists were assimilating totally new subject-matter, a difficult process in itself, and also that they were trying to win the widest possible "audience", in a country with a predominantly peasant population (then as much as 85 per cent of the total).

Artistic activity in the twenties was extremely intense. There were fierce polemics between individual artists and especially groups, and great efforts were made to bring the artists' works to the attention of the workers and to some extent of the peasants. But although there was a great deal of faction, underlying it all was a healthy process of creative competition, each movement and each individual artist searching for the best means of serving the Revolution.

The objective reality of the period demanded variety, and this variety was expressed in the founding of numerous groups and societies, large and small, some ephemeral, others lasting.

The largest and most influential of the latter was the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AARR), founded in 1921. The AARR artists—Loganson, Cheptsov, Terpsikhоров, Shukhmin, A. Gerasimov and others—mainly painted genre and historical works in the manner of 19th-century realism. They were the first to acquire a truly mass audience for their paintings and sculptures. This was both a merit and a defect of their art, since, their main aim being

intelligibility at any price, this occasionally led to oversimplification of their formal idiom, a rather exaggerated attention to detail, and a generally laboured approach.

Nor was this oversimplification the exclusive monopoly of the AARR. It was largely the result of the theories of vulgar sociology current at the time. Everything that was personal and individual was branded "bourgeois", and there was an overwhelming tendency to equate the "proletarian" with simplicity and coarseness. Plebeian asceticism was still alive among the masses and found its expression in art, seasoned by the radical intelligentsia's excessive zeal for self-denial.

These same motives were reflected in the activities of another major group of the period, the Society of Easel Painters (SEP), founded in 1924, mainly by young ex-avant-garde artists. It included Sterenberg, Deineka, Viliams, Pimenov, Tyshler, Goncharov, and others, who, in actual fact, did not limit themselves to easel paintings but made outstanding contributions in graphic art, monumental painting and stage design.

The SEP artists were frequently compared to the German *Die neue Sachlichkeit* (The New Objectivity) movement, and justifiably so as regards the formal features of their work. But the two movements were entirely different in spirit. The SEP artists were primarily genre-poets of dynamic urban civilisation, technical achievements and physical fitness. They showed a marked preference for impetuous rhythms, sweeping expressive movement, and metallic tones. The SEP artists were romantics at heart, who combined emotional intensity with somewhat exaggerated attention to technique.

Both AARR and SEP—in their very different ways—devoted themselves entirely to contemporary themes. However, the educative function of the art of the twenties involved more than the chronicling of contemporary life. It was equally important that the poetic traditions of plastic form and colour and the humanitarian role of art as a means of revealing the manifold wealth of the human spirit should be preserved and cultivated. This was the important contribution of such groups as the Society of Moscow Artists, in which the dominant role was played by the Russian "Cézannists"—Konchalovsky, Mashkov, Lentulov, Kuprin and Osmerkin—and the Four Arts Society, uniting artists of various tastes and aims but who were agreed in cultivating the formal language of art as a means of spiritual expression—Petrov-Vodkin and Istomin, Chernyshev and S. Gerasimov, Matveyev and Favorsky, Kuznetsov and Kupreyanov.

It must not be thought that the artists belonging to these last groups stood aside from the main tendency towards a rapprochement with reality. Many of the best works of the twenties on contemporary themes were produced in their studios. However, there was something "withdrawn" and "personal" about much of their art.

At the time they were frequently attacked for "aestheticism", and even labelled "bourgeois". However, it is impossible to take the majority of these accusations seriously today.

In point of fact they were Soviet artists in the full sense of the word. Their works, imbued with the poetry of life, did not shy from the spiritual conflicts of those years. The link between art and life, the artist's "commitment", already accepted as a matter of course, made art the focus of the

political, social and moral conflicts and problems of the time

It goes without saying that there existed trends and theories in the art of that period that were quite alien or openly hostile to the Revolution. They were reflected now in direct political opposition, now in aestheticism divorced from life, and sometimes in outright philistinism.

It would be a mistake to present the history of Soviet art as a straightforward triumphal procession towards a paradise for all and sundry. There was struggle, and extremely fierce struggle at that. The tremendously difficult task of ideological conversion was in progress. There were open enemies. And there were émigré artists who did not immediately grasp the true significance of the October Revolution for art. The latter included such major talents as Benois, Rerikh, Dobuzhinsky, Shagal and Goncharova. This was a tragic misunderstanding. For the Revolution sought not to enslave art but to enlist its support and form a brotherly union with it. It was not surprising therefore that so many of the émigré artists should have either returned home or become sincere friends of the Soviet Union.

It must be stressed once again that it was then, in the twenties, that the turn of the vast majority of painters, sculptors and graphic artists to life, to the masses and to the Revolution was accomplished, and that a new art, socialist in spirit and inclination, arose and put forth its first tender green shoots.

Today, as we look back at those far-off years from the vantage point of the present, the remarkable thing that strikes us is not that there were so many weaknesses and failures; but that those years not only saw the laying of firm foundations

for future development but produced numerous outstanding works of art. Suffice it to mention Deineka's *Defence of Petrograd*, Petrov-Vodkin's *Death of a Commissar*, Ioganson's *Communist Under Interrogation*, S. Gerasimov's *Partisans' Oath*, Konchalovsky's *From the Fair*, Malyutin's *Portrait of Turmanov*, Cheptsov's *Meeting of the Village Party Cell*, Mashkov's *Moscow Eats*, the drawings and engravings of Favorsky, Kravchenko, Lebedev and Kupreyanov, and the sculptures *Monument to Lenin in Zages* by Shadr, Matveyev's *October* and so on.

No less important than the wealth and variety of exploration and experiment that was eventually to bear fruit on the basis of the new socialist movement, and the establishment of firm new links between art and society, was the tremendous impulse given to the development of the national arts of the numerous non-Russians inhabiting the Soviet Union. Some of these peoples, like the Ukrainians, Georgians and Armenians, had already fine artistic traditions of their own whose development, however, had been impeded by tsarist oppression. Others, such as the Uzbeks, Azerbaijanians and Turkmenes, had only recently "discovered" art in its modern forms. These cultures now began to take their first hesitant steps, frequently subscribing to somewhat artificial stylisation and crude primitivism. But they already had several highly talented artists, with whom there was absolutely no need to make allowances for the "immaturity" of their respective cultures. Suffice it to mention Saryan and Sarksyan in Armenia, Gudashvili and Kokobadze in Georgia, Krichevsky and Petritsky in the Ukraine, and Volkov in Uzbekistan.

With the thirties (1932) there began a new phase in the development of Soviet art, which was to last up to the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

This period was ushered in by the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party to disband the so-called "proletarian creative organizations", and create specific unions for each of the arts—literature, music, the cinema and the fine arts. This decision merely served to officially confirm a process that had already matured in practice. Now that the Soviet people was embarking on the task of building socialism, it was necessary for all creative efforts to be concentrated and directed towards the achievement of this gigantic undertaking. In these conditions, loose general groupings could only serve to put the brakes on progress, as was in fact already evident in practice by the end of the twenties.

In the fine arts, the Russian Association of Proletarian Artists had come on the scene rather late in the day and did not survive for long (1930-32). It disappeared leaving no noticeable mark on practical artistic output. But at the end of the twenties there was a noticeable urge to break out of the isolation that the existence of separate groups imposed. Thus, the dissolution of RAPA and other groups was received with great satisfaction by the majority of artists.

In order to understand the emotional tenor of Soviet art during the thirties we must bear in mind the special spiritual atmosphere that marked the first half of the decade. The country had solved its major economic difficulties, the hard years of restoration of the ravaged economy in town and countryside were over, and there had

creative assimilation of all the spiritual values accumulated over the ages.

This was a fruitful process that enriched Soviet art in many ways. Familiarity with the classics enabled artists to overcome naive pictorial descriptiveness and a primitive schematic approach, and helped cultivate profound aesthetic perception, and appreciation of formal beauty.

But here lurked the serious danger of sanctification of old forms, and a dogmatic insistence on them. The Latin proverb that our failings are the continuation of our merits (which Lenin was fond of repeating as an expression of dialectical transition of phenomena into their opposites) was most applicable here. The absolutisation of the artistic heritage could and did lead to classicist tendencies involving a refusal to recognise the contradictions of life.

This was especially manifest in the architecture of the period and associated decorative work, as well as in monumental sculpture and murals. Often genuine enthusiasm degenerated into bombastic rhetoric, the urge to achieve harmonious grandeur led to hideous pomposity, and delight in the classics to pedestrian academic imitation.

These trends are often ascribed to the cult of Stalin's personality. This is a somewhat superficial explanation although the Stalin cult certainly left an imprint on many works of the period. This "pomp and circumstance" in art, the most talented exponent of which was undoubtedly the painter A. Gerasimov, although important, especially towards the end of the thirties, can hardly be regarded as the decisive trend of the period.

The art of the twenties had been characterised

lirical rather than derivative tasks, as testified by the works of Shmarinov, Kibrik, Dekhterov and Kanyan. The psychological portrait came to occupy an important place. The interest in social type characteristic of the twenties (viz. Ryabushky's *Uralmen (Chairman)*) was replaced by interest in the individual personality, as exemplified by the later blossoming of the talent of the old master Neletsov, who had painted religious compositions in the 1910s and 1920s and now in his old age produced a whole series of expressive portraits in the realistic manner of the early years of the century. Alongside this "classicist" manner that affirmed itself not only in portraiture but also in landscape painting (S. Gerasimov and Grabar), there was another strong trend drawing on very different expressive devices. Such, for example, was the dramatic *Portrait of Meyerhold* by Konchalovsky, and also the sculpture bust *Portrait of the Pilot Chkalov* by Lebedeva, the subject compositions of Shegal, the landscapes of Saryan, the still lifes of Osmerkin, and Tyshler's work for the stage. But despite the variety in devices and techniques, all the Soviet art of the thirties had one feature in common.

A short time earlier, one of the most outstanding sociologists of this century, José Ortega y Gasset, had described the development of modern art in the West as a process of "dehumanisation". The avant-garde artists had purchased their achievements in form at the costly price of renunciation of human values. True, their art often remained highly subjective, but even where it was "in defence of man", so to speak, it had nevertheless ceased to be art "about man". The dehumanisation of art was in fact one of the major symptoms of a grave aesthetic crisis.

Soviet art in the thirties passionately affirmed the principles of humanism. Defending the "eternal values" of truth, goodness and beauty making its hero the man of the new society and declaring him the heir to all that was best in the cultural legacy of the past and herald of the versatile personality that would emerge in the communist society of the future it derived its poetics from this noble humanist ideal. This humanitarian enthusiasm that assumed itself through all the hard trials of those years as the true essence of the socialist socio aesthetic ideal, exerted magnetic attraction. It is surely no accident that this period saw a considerable increase in the influence of Soviet literature, the Soviet cinema, and Soviet art abroad.

The sculpture *Worker and Collective Farm Woman*, produced by Mukhina for the Soviet pavilion at the World Fair in Paris in 1937 was acclaimed by Romain Rolland as a symbol of the new world.

This humanist artistic movement of the thirties stood before the world as an embodiment of what was then (1932-34) named socialist realism.

Probably no other concept in the history of world art has been so distorted and abused as the concept of "socialist realism". This is no doubt due mainly to the hostility all manifestations of the new culture provoke among the opponents of the Soviet state and communism. Ignorance is also to blame, and matters were not helped by certain misrepresentations at home.

In point of fact, however, not only is it absurd to regard socialist realism simply as the artistic expression of the personality cult, it is also wrong to try and identify it or even associate it with any particular manner, style or genre.

The fact that stylistic features of 19th- and early 20th-century realism predominated in Soviet art at the time the method was first promulgated is no doubt partly responsible for such misconceptions. Later, in the forties, dogmatic critics equated socialist realism with academic formal methods. However, a look at the documents of the Communist Party immediately reveals the absurdity of accusations that the Party is out to "lay down the law" with respect to form and style.

Socialist realism is an historical concept, and as such organic and constantly developing. The method the Party urged artists to adopt concerned the relationship between art and reality; it did not lay down any particular formal or stylistic canons.

Nor should the general realist trend of Soviet art, which had already clearly emerged in the period in question, blind us to the variety in manner and style that was to be found within this comprehensive framework. There were striking contrasts to be observed between the laconic monumental portraits by Korin and the lyrical portraits by Fonvizin, between the dynamic romanticism of Shadr and Merkurov's static forms in sculpture, and between the austere linear style of Favorsky's and Bruni's murals and the "baroque" flamboyance of Lansere.

Any artistic method, and the socialist realist method in particular, involves certain principles concerning the relationship between art and reality. Thus, changes in real life, which serves as the object of art, plus the development of the self-awareness of society expressed in art, produce changes in style and a reshuffling of genre and formal features.

This is why socialist realism must be regarded not as a yardstick to be applied to particular works, but rather as an organic creative principle, developing if only for the simple reason that there is no such thing as socialist realism in isolation from the life of the people. And as history advances and the people change, so people's minds are broadened and their perception deepened, and socialist realism is bound to develop along with them. Thus, socialist realism can rightly be called an "open-ended system".

Back in the thirties, the very idea of a single method was significant since it reflected and confirmed the logical course of events. The ideological and spiritual unification of the Soviet people around socialism found its aesthetic expression in the urge for artistic unity. Moreover, the definition of socialist realism then given, as a truthful, concrete historical depiction of reality in its revolutionary development designed to educate people in the spirit of communism, was only presented as the general direction. No mention was made of any particular style, genre, or concrete creative tastes, let alone of any "rules". It was simply a question of summarising the basic tendencies of development of Soviet art: its connection with practical reality—its social essence, its humanistic character and its realism, provided this is not understood as a formal principle but as the vital source of all art that aspires to active intervention in reality, based on objective truth and not arbitrary, subjective impulses.

Unfortunately, already in the pre-war years, some had begun to verify "adherence" to socialist realism by collation with acknowledged models, identifying the method with particular canons, albeit of the very best. This was bound to

lead to difficulties in practice and to even greater misunderstandings in artistic theory.

The art of the thirties was an important stage in the history of socialist realism. That broad manifestation of humanism and that mood which might be called historical optimism, served to foster Soviet man's self-awareness, that spiritual enrichment which provided the basis for the further advance of socialist art in the post-war years.

But in the meantime art was to undergo the hard tests of the Great Patriotic War.

It was in the war years, with the tremendous responsibility they imposed on artists, that Soviet art revealed what a firm social basis it already had. The military reverses of 1941, the heavy bombings, and all the hardships of the war years might have been expected to shake the morale of artists, sow disillusionment and cause them to try to escape the harsh reality of war.

In fact, the opposite occurred. Soviet art felt itself fully mobilised. Practical problems automatically assumed pride of place. The war gave a stimulus to poster drawing and satirical cartoons such as they had not received since the Civil War. Koretsky's *Save Us, Red Army Man!*, Toidze's *The Motherland Is Calling*, the posters of Ivanov, and the satirical posters of Kukryniksy and Efimov became powerful weapons in the struggle with the nazis. There were many heroic and dramatic works produced, such as S. Gerasimov's *Partisan's Mother*, Deineka's *Defence of Sebastopol*, the series of drawings *We Shall Not Forget, We Shall Not Forgive* by Shmarinov, and the painting *The Fascist Has Flown Over* by Plastov. Some artists sought patriotic inspiration in historical subjects, such as Korin with his

triptych *The Russian People*, and the series of illustrations by Favorsky to the Russian heroic epic *The Lay of Igor's Host*. There were naturally numerous battle scenes providing an artistic chronicle of military events.

The difference between Soviet and Western art was particularly evident in the war years. Numerous honest artists in the West complained bitterly that they were not given a proper chance to contribute to the war effort. Many of them did not have the opportunity to fully express their anti-fascist sentiments until the war was already over. During the war we see either pedestrian "routine" works turned out by professional "war artists", more or less successful reporters with the pencil or the brush, or real artists taking refuge from bursting bombs and human suffering in the safety of their studios, where they sometimes produced fine works of art, but art that was literally "out of this world".

It was the strong humanist and social strain in Soviet socialist art that determined its spirit in the war years. Not only artists working in some way or other "for the front", but all truly profound and sensitive artists felt duty-bound to express the sentiments and emotions of the masses. This highly charged moral atmosphere made itself felt in the patriotic lyricism of Romadin's series of landscapes *Volga Is a Russian River*, in Saryan's angry *Self-Portrait, 1942*, in the intense portraits of Falk and the ardent humanity of Matveyev's sculptures. These works may not have been about the war; nevertheless they were "of the war".

Whatever artists were working on, they were fully aware of their firm link with their people, its sufferings, struggle and victory. And it is not

surprising that the moral ardour of the war years should have continued down to the present and remain, a quarter of a century later, a major source of inspiration and creative exploration.

It is not simply a question of subjects and images connected with the war, from *The Return* by Ukrainian artist Kostetsky (1948) to *Memories* by Moscow painter Popkov (1967). The important thing is that the severe trials of the war further tempered the spirit of Soviet art, enabling artists to view things more seriously and soberly than before. All the rose-coloured romanticism of the pre-war years was now discarded as frivolous, and artists threw themselves with renewed vigour into the quest for truth. The noble humanism of Soviet art became more profound, more weighty in that it was acquired at the price of suffering, and civil ardour became stronger than ever.

The post-war period in the development of Soviet art was a period of complex, profound processes and it is perhaps too early to try and assess conclusively. While in the first post-war decade (1945-55) the inertia of the thirties still weighed heavily, the years that followed were full of experiment and exploration. There was closer contact with the art of other countries, numerous exhibitions gave Soviet people an opportunity to see the great variety of the contemporary art, from the USA to Nigeria, from Italy to Vietnam, from Hungary to Mexico. Tremendous social advances at home were bound to have an impact on the aesthetic taste of the masses and the function of art.

The war and the immediate post-war years had seen important changes in the social life of the country. The transference of numerous industrial plants eastwards beyond the Urals, a

rapid growth in the urban population, a sharp increase in the general educational level of the population and in the number of highly qualified people and skilled workers in town and country alike, the penetration of modern technology, the cinema, radio and TV into the most distant parts of the country and the elimination of "stagnant backwaters"—all these factors had wide repercussions and were bound to influence art. Time-hallowed traditions went by the board and social inertia was replaced by dynamism, producing important changes in the mentality of the masses, so that the artist was working for a totally different audience than thirty years before.

All this naturally affected the very function of fine arts. Their role as a source of information was gradually weakened since newspapers, magazines, wireless and TV provide people with information in abundance. The higher intellectual and cultural level of the masses, their broader and more profound spiritual demands and greater concern with the complex problems of the modern world necessitated that art should turn to ever more complicated matters, such as philosophical reflection, lyrical experience and the need for beauty in everyday life.

All this was without detriment to the fundamental principles underlying Soviet art—its essentially social nature, its commitment to socialism and the Party, to the cause of liberating mankind from all forms of social oppression, its fidelity to humanistic creative principles, or the development of realism. Soviet art has abandoned none of those principles which were fundamental to its early growth.

But the fact that the underlying principles remain unchanged does not imply, as we have

already seen, that no changes can occur at all. Life is rushing forward and, faithful to its creative principles, Soviet socialist art does likewise. There are important processes underway, involving intense search, and although it is still too early to determine which of these processes will prove fruitful and which will turn out to have been but a temporary distraction or error, the important thing is that in post-war Soviet art there was never at any point to be observed that bitterness associated with the so-called "lost generation". Soviet art today is entirely forward-looking, it is working for the future, full of creative power and vitality. And in full accord with this are the words contained in the Communist Party Programme about the position of the Party over questions of art, its aim being to ensure "every opportunity of displaying creative initiative and skill, using manifold forms, styles, and genres". The purpose of this lies in forging a firmer link between art and the life of the people and its struggle, and promotion, through art, of spiritual development and ideological education in the spirit of communism.

At the 24th Congress of the CPSU, L. I. Brezhnev said on behalf of the whole Party: "We are for an attentive attitude to creative quests, for the full unfolding of the individuality of gifts and talents, for the diversity and wealth of forms and styles evolved on the basis of the method of socialist realism. The strength of Party leadership lies in the ability to spark the artist with enthusiasm for the lofty mission of serving the people and turn him into a convinced and ardent participant in the remaking of society along communist lines."

The main task that confronted art immediately after the war was to help people fully understand the heroic and tragic experience of the war, "pool" the vast collective experience of millions of people and boldly face the many hardships of the first post-war years.

It was only natural that artists should have returned again and again to the war theme, now affirming in deliberately magnified figures the enthusiasm of victory won in gigantic battles, as in Vuchetich's monument to the Soviet soldier in Berlin, now combining poetry and drama as in Kostetsky's painting on the subject of reunion. There were numerous monuments to fallen heroes (such as Manizer's monument to the partisan girl Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya), book illustrations and battle scenes.

Although the quality of these works produced in the first years after the victory over Hitler Germany varied considerably, many of them representing heroic or dramatic figures in the stylistic idioms of the twenties and thirties, they produced a sharp response which was often short-lived, but sometimes proved lasting. The same may be said of the works devoted to the theme of post-war reconstruction or the life of simple folk (Yablonskaya's *Bread* and Laktionov's *Letter from the Front*), and historical paintings on revolutionary subjects (Serov's *Peasant Deputies Received by Lenin*).

In many of the works of those years we feel more the desire on the part of artists to take up where they had left off when the war interrupted them than a search for anything new, an inclination to keep to the beaten track rather than set out along new untrodden paths. This is perfectly understandable, since an atmosphere of restora-

tion and reconstruction reigned throughout the country. But naturally this mood could not but cause a revival of certain remnants of conservative inertia. It must also be borne in mind that the personality cult, then at the height of its influence over art, boosted these trends.

It would be a mistake however to attribute to the pressure of the personality cult all the shortcomings of the art of the first post-war years, since this was also a period in which art was gathering strength for a new leap forward. It is equally superficial to ascribe the turning point in art in the second half of the fifties exclusively to the end of the personality cult. This was undoubtedly an event of great importance for the spiritual life of the country and one to which art, by its very nature, was bound to react with special excitement, leading to certain ideological errors, to be noted in particular among some of the younger artists between 1956 and the early sixties.

Nevertheless, the intensity of artistic life in the last decade was due to far wider and more general causes. It is only natural that art should develop unevenly rather than by regular stages, that "quiet" periods should see the gathering of strength and energy to be followed by a burst of creative expression. The first post-war decade was just such a period of "latent" development of socialist realism in art.

No less important is the fact that by the sixties that important advance in the nature and function of art, to the historical sources of which we have already referred, had come into its own.

The main characteristic feature of the present stage in the development of Soviet art is a wide concern for a renewal of the poetics and style of

realist art, which finds expression in a search for inspiration in the art of the turn of the century, Russian icon painting, the early Renaissance and folk art in all its national varieties. Soviet artists are also paying great attention to the experience of contemporary foreign art. This must not be understood, as many foreign art critics are wont to interpret it, as a tendency for Soviet art to move closer to Western art and for Soviet artists, especially the younger ones, to imitate their more "advanced" foreign colleagues.

Naturally, no sensible Soviet artist will shut his eyes to genuine creative experience wherever he finds it. Contacts are becoming broader, and this has proved very much to the benefit of quite a few artists. There was undoubtedly at first a tendency for artists to imitate major Western 20th-century artists like Matisse, Picasso and Moore. But a close look is sufficient to convince one that Soviet art is by no means following in the wake of avant-garde art, but is plunging forward towards new forms within the realist method.

In other words, what we have is a complex process of formation of a new stage in the art of socialist realism, in which new possibilities of style and genre are being explored and not the "sliding" of Soviet artists towards Western concepts of "modern art".

Again, this does not mean that a fruitful process is not under way leading to the mutual enrichment of art and various movements but simply that Soviet art today is concerned not with repeating the past but with creating the future.

All the talk of a "departure from realism" by some Soviet artists and especially the young artists is at best based on an extremely super-

ficial view of the present state of Soviet art. What is happening in fact is something quite different—the crystallisation of new aesthetic and formal trends within the general channel of socialist realism.

We can evidently speak of a new stage in the development of socialist realism. The realist form of the thirties and forties sought a visual image to be perceived as a reproduction of the existing reality of the "here and now", what we might call "the effect of presence", since the beholder finds himself in the position of a witness of what is happening, irrespective of whether the manner in which the subject was treated derived from the forms of mid-nineteenth century realism, impressionism or "Cézannism". It is not difficult to see the connection between this approach and a narrative, "analytic" interpretation of life.

Nowadays there is a tendency to depart from "the effect of presence", reality being instead reflected in a visual image, through the prism, as it were, of reflection or memory, acquiring a philosophico-lyrical stamp. What we have here is an "indirect" reflection of reality, its poetic interpretation. This by no means represents a departure from life, but simply another manner of its aesthetic perception.

This approach involves its own special structure of formal devices. The emotional expressiveness of the "thought-image", the "memory-image" or the "experience-image" puts a higher demand on the individual elements of form—colour, rhythm, surface, line, light, etc.—for each of them serves not only to build up the picture, but, like music, to produce a mood, to transmit a subjective impulse, for example, a demand, daring or simply a dream.

It should be stressed, however, that this subjectivity remains strongly linked to reality. Here lies a fundamental difference between Soviet art and many movements in Western art, for underlying the latter is a deep rift between the artist and reality. Arbitrary subjectivity is quite alien to the new trends in Soviet art, and what we referred to as the "subjective impulse" is perception of the objective possibilities of life and the true nature of human aspirations.

Hence the growing demand for spiritual content, which is the cause of so much exploration. The right path cannot be found at once, and today we can see some extremely successful discoveries side by side with fruitless divagation, and genuine creative boldness alongside sterile attempts at originality and "fashionability".

Soviet art has embarked on a new stage of development, and at any such formative period one expects a great deal of not always profitable turmoil, from which more or less successful new forms and styles will emerge only gradually.

Thus, it is easier when speaking of the Soviet art of the present to perceive what is being born in conflict than to decide what has actually to be regarded as an achievement and has already earned a place in the history of art.

There has been a significant shift of emphasis in the role of the different fine arts. Easel art has ceased to be the almost exclusively predominant form, and various branches of monumental and decorative art have come to the fore in the last decade—mosaics, murals, stained glass, decorative sculpture in a great variety of materials, from ceramics to bronze-chasing. Design has assumed a tremendous importance, and stage

ficial view of the present state of Soviet art. What is happening in fact is something quite different—the crystallisation of new aesthetic and formal trends within the general channel of socialist realism.

We can evidently speak of a new stage in the development of socialist realism. The realist form of the thirties and forties sought a visual image to be perceived as a reproduction of the existing reality of the "here and now", what we might call "the effect of presence", since the beholder finds himself in the position of a witness of what is happening, irrespective of whether the manner in which the subject was treated derived from the forms of mid-nineteenth century realism, impressionism or "Cézannism". It is not difficult to see the connection between this approach and a narrative, "analytic" interpretation of life.

Nowadays there is a tendency to depart from "the effect of presence", reality being more reflected in a visual image, through the prism of it were, of reflection or memory, acquiring philosophico-lyrical stamp. What we have is an "indirect" reflection of reality, an interpretation. This by no means represents a departure from life, but simply a change of its aesthetic perception.

This approach involves its use of formal devices. The use of the "thought-image" and the "experience-image" of the individual, the surface, line, form, not only to create a pulse, for a dream

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design is flourishing. Wood-cuts, lino-cuts and other forms of print have developed on a massive scale. Nevertheless, easel paintings and sculpture remain the centre of the most lively and intense creative explorations.

As for genre, historical subjects and themes from everyday life have lost their dominant position in painting, not because artists have ceased to treat such subjects, but rather because they tend to prefer a more synthetic content, carrying more general socio-philosophical and socio-aesthetic implications, and more insistently monumental or decorative in manner. In this connection we can cite the monumental psychological compositions of Korzhev, the severe lapidary style of the Latvian artist Iitners in his historical canvases, the murals of Talberg and Vainelsoy, the panels of the Georgian artist Makharadze and the Armenian Grigoryan, the stage sets of Zolotaryov and Levental, the highly emotional and expressive graphic art of the Ukrainian Yakutovich and the Estonian Keerend, the lyrical figures of the Ukrainian Yablonskaya, the Lithuanian Svalas, and the Turkmen Klychev.

The artists of the middle generation are playing the leading role in the development of a new feature in the Soviet art and it is already possible to mention numerous works of theirs as undoubtedly having taken a firm place in the history of Soviet art. The following list, though far from exhaustive, has the advantage of being pretty definite: the painting, *The Two and Song* by Popkov, the cycle *Russian Illumen* by Ivanov, *The Repairers* and *Portrait of Kara-Karayev* by the Azerbaijani Salakhov, *The Gymnasts and Family* by Zhilinsky, *The Partisan Madman* by the Byelorussian Savitsky, the triptych *The History*

of a Life by the Moldavian Grecu, the cycles of large graphic compositions by Zakharov and Golitsin, the monument *Mother* in Pirčiupis by Lithuanian sculptor Jocubonis, the painting *The Earth* by Leningrad artist Moiseyenko, the compositions *Our Everydays* and *October HQ* by Nikonov, and the sculptures by Shakhovskoi and Komov.

In view of the general trend towards philosophical lyricism one might well expect the large-scale canvas to be ousted by landscapes, still lifes and more neutral, intimate genres. In actual fact, however, this has not happened. Naturally, many such paintings are to be seen at exhibitions, including such first-class works as those of Nissky and Tansykbayev, but on the whole, there is still to be noted a strong preference for works on a large scale providing a synthesis of thought and emotion, testifying to the fact that Soviet art has not been infected with social indifference and has not lost its intensity of creative thought.

The younger generation of artists also show no sign whatsoever of escapism and insularity. They are extremely concerned with skill and quality and problems of form, and often evince emphatic dissatisfaction with the present state of art, but they never try to run away from life and escape into the world of purely technical problems. They are all passionately eager to create works of "actuality" in the fullest meaning of the word, in other words, art with rich spiritual content, art that people need.

This applies to the sculptors Alexandrov and Pologova, the painters Obrosov, Ossovsky and the Smolin brothers, the Azerbaijani Narimanbekov, the Ukrainian Rybachuk, the Estonian Kormashov, the Lithuanian graphic artist Ma-

kunaite, the Georgian Nizharadze, to mention but a few.

It is significant that artists from every region and of every nationality in the country are taking part in this general movement.

Indeed, one of the most remarkable features of the present stage in the development of Soviet fine arts is the maturity of many highly distinctive and original national cultures.

We have already noted how the twenties saw the awakening of the creative energies of many peoples who had hitherto no idea of art in its modern forms of painting, sculpture and graphic art, and whose art was limited to folk art, often of an extremely high quality, but nevertheless fast becoming anachronistic.

Throughout the history of Soviet culture the greatest attention was given to the development of the arts of the various nationalities of the USSR.

Sometimes artists in the national republics cultivated traditional motifs and devices, and sought to provide the national element either through subject-matter connected with the specific features of the life of the nation or people in question, in elements of national ornamentation and national decoration, or even in intentionally primitive ideas. This approach was no longer valid once the national schools had assimilated, not by shy timid imitation but by virtue of their achievement of a higher level of material and spiritual culture, the whole international experience of Soviet and world fine arts.

Today, however, the majority of national cultures stand firmly on their own feet: the art of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldavia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenia,

or the Baltic Republics, does not require that one make any allowances for their past

In many national centres where painting as we know it did not exist and where nothing of real significance had been accomplished in the visual arts, important artistic schools are now flourishing. Azerbaijan, for one, can boast such outstanding artists as Salakhov, Narimanbekov and Abdullayev. Lithuania excels in such widely divergent fields as stained glass, monumental sculpture, easel painting and the applied arts, while Turkmenia and Bashkiria have produced painters with a serious attitude to the problems of artistic skill that is quite amazing in view of their fairly recent artistic roots.

Today, the national character of the art of the various Soviet nationalities is expressed not in external, superficial elements, but in original strains of artistic thought and perception, in newly formed aesthetic traditions, in original creative temperament. Soviet art, and indeed world art, has never before seen such a harmonious combination of common artistic aspirations, aims and principles with divergence of national forms.

The tremendous variety to be observed in the various national schools of Soviet art reflects another major trend of its present-day development: the emergence of creative individuality. There are profound historical reasons for this. The variety of art reflects not only the tremendous variety of talents, but the variety of the aesthetic tastes and demands of the masses.

We are now approaching a position where plastic images created by Soviet artists enable everybody to find something in tune with his inner requirements. It is difficult to overestimate

the importance of this trend, which provides a solution to one of the main aims of the building of communism—the full, all-round satisfaction of the spiritual needs of the fully developed human personality. In this respect art is a means for educating people in the spirit of communism, since it provides the spiritual material for the intellectual and emotional development of the human personality. At the time it is not only a means but also an end, since a great variety of spiritual values created by society is a guarantee of full aesthetic satisfaction of the needs of society as a whole and each individual member of society.

This is why the Communist Party continues to stress in all its declarations on art, and in its Programme, that its main concern with regard to art is to ensure its all-round development by every means possible for the benefit of Soviet man as the builder of communism.

The present stage in the development of Soviet art heralds new opportunities and prospects for the solution of this noble task. The intensive creative exploration being undertaken today serves as a guarantee that art will become one of the major sources of human spiritual enrichment.

In attempting to put the contribution made by Soviet art to world art in a nutshell, we might say that it consists in the fact that Soviet art was in the van of those who founded the new realist movement of the 20th century.

In modern world art there is a growing tendency towards a realist "Renaissance", a revival of realism. Its development is an extremely complex and far from straightforward process. But just as the forces of progress in the world are

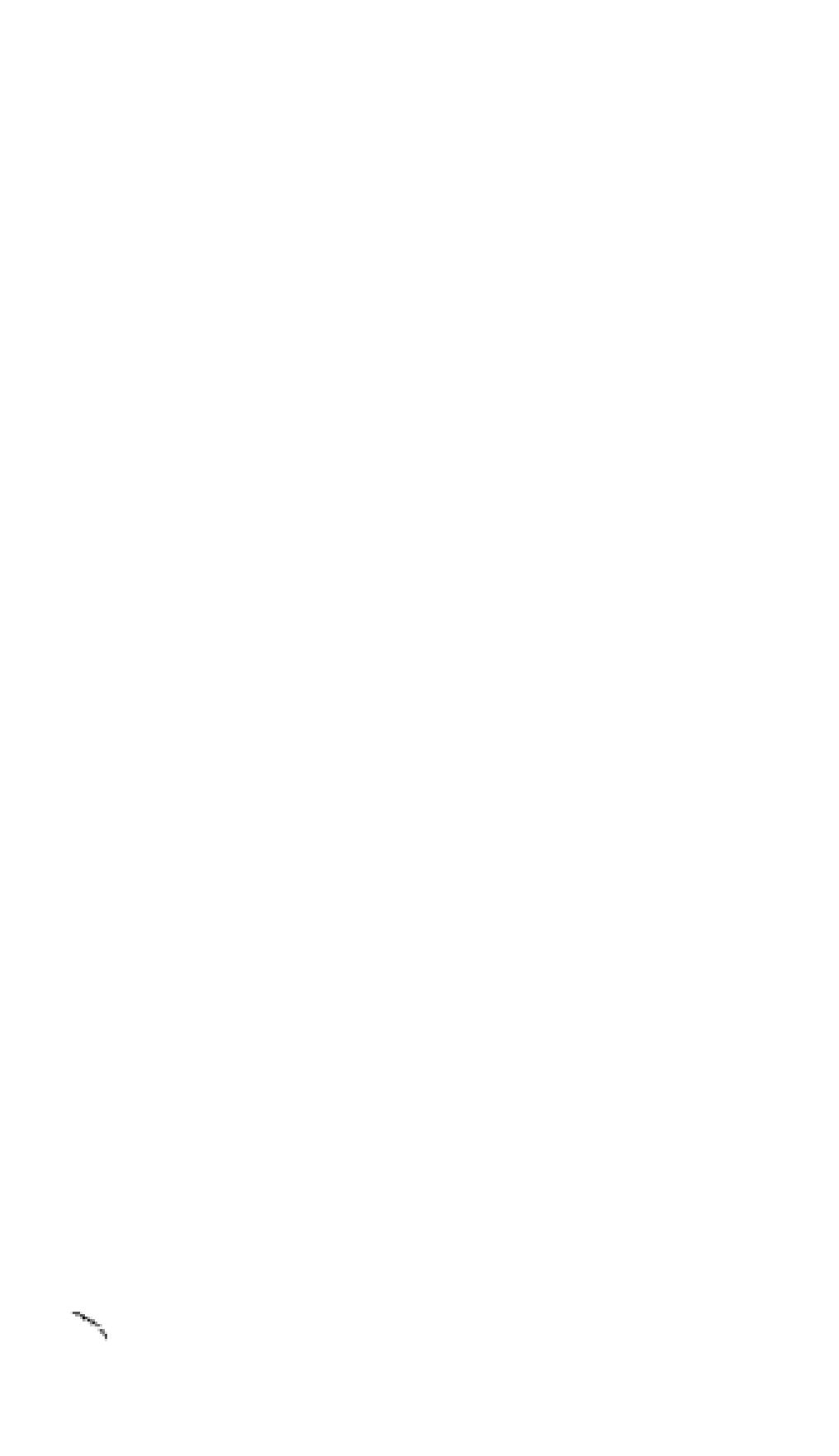
irresistible, so is the urge of art not to lose touch with life and people.

We are clearly dealing here with a broad historical process that will develop over many decades. And it is no exaggeration to say that Soviet art and its example have played, and continue to play, a major role in this process.

The reason is to be sought in the organic link between the artist and the life of the masses, the artist's commitment to the practical creation of a new life that has been fostered by the Communist Party. It is from this inexhaustible fountainhead that the Soviet artist draws his strength and inspiration.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art* Russ. ed., Moscow, 1967, p. 664.





So far we have traced the main features of more than half a century's experience in the development of the various art forms—literature, the theatre, the cinema, painting and music. The authors of previous articles have told the foreign reader, in some detail, of works of art which reflect the pride and glory of the multi-national Soviet culture. They have examined the different periods of its historical development, the main peculiarities of Soviet art today.

I do not propose to recapitulate what has already been said by other researchers, nor to draw any conclusions from their findings. However, the part allotted to me in this collection—the final part—arouses a desire to go a little further beyond the empirical material, and to consider the relationship between art and socialism against the broad background of history, as outlined in the Introduction. I am interested, above all, in the objective social and historical bases of innovation in socialist art, and I would like to discover the ultimate causes of the changes in artistic consciousness which, indeed, mark the opening of a new era in the development of world culture.

1

In Russian there is an expression "to start at the hearth", and my "hearth"—or, to put it less figuratively, the theoretical starting-point of my discourse—is the aesthetics of Hegel. And this is

not only because the great dialectical philosopher managed to express so much of importance about the nature and purpose of art. Although it may seem paradoxical, I would venture to say that in order to understand the essence of socialist realism, one must turn to the concept of development of world art that was put before an audience at Berlin University at the beginning of the 19th century by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

One of the key concepts of Hegel's aesthetics is "the condition of the world". By this is meant "the mode of spiritual existence",¹ taken in its relation to the aesthetic ideal. In contemporary idiom, we would say that this concept conveys complex "objective-subjective" information on man's place in the system of social relationships, his perception of the world, on the conditions required for the vital activity of the individual and the peculiarities of social consciousness, in a word, on the "spiritual reality" against the background of which a work of art is produced.

Hegel believed the most favourable climate for artistic creation to be a "heroic condition of the world". In his opinion it was precisely on this basis that there arose in due course the genuine, "ideal" art which was to set the standards and act as a model for judgements on the nature of creative art, a reckoning point from which to evaluate contemporary art.

According to Hegel, the most essential characteristic of the heroic epoch is the perfect harmony between man and the world. This harmony commences at the level of nature—the natural life environment. The heroic individual has already emerged from nature and risen above the primitive paltriness of spiritual interests, but he has

the character and its condition and activity, and the 'objective' of external being do not fall apart as mutually indifferent and disparate, but display harmony and mutual belonging."

Although harmony of man with his environment, immediate self-sufficiency of the individual, are essential conditions for a "heroic condition of the world", they alone are not enough. According to Hegel, the heroic epoch is inseparable from a certain "essential enthusiasm". This is a purpose which emerges at a given moment into the foreground and brings into focus, as it were, all the most important tasks of a group or a people. It touches the deepest heartstrings of each individual and yet does not result in egoistic or selfish private interests; it expresses the lofty aspirations and desires of a group or of all mankind. This purpose is extremely—immensely—hard to achieve, but it is—after all—real and finally attainable. It takes time, perhaps a long time, to achieve—but it is always there, never out of sight, never an abstraction. It is a bridge to the future, it opens up the way to further progress, but at the given moment it attracts all attention, and stands out before men with blinding clarity.

In art too, according to Hegel, an indispensable feature of the heroic character "is a definite in-itself-essential enthusiasm in a rich and full breast". Goethe, for example, succeeds when as the background and atmosphere "he opens up before us the great interests of revolution and one's own fatherland, and relates the in-itself-limited material to the broadest and most significant world events". However, this principle in the creation of character was most fully implemented at the earlier stages of artistic develop-

In due course, art turned to images of kings, generals and other "rulers of the people" insofar as they were supposed to have immediate self-sufficiency and the means of impressing the stamp of their individuality on the course of world events. Some scope for ideal expression in art was made possible by transposing the action "to mythical ages, and in general to older days", which remained in the imagination of the reader and the spectator the arena for the free vital activity of individuals. But all this, the rearguard struggle of artistic culture, was not enough to decide the outcome of the battle. All the attempts of art "to win back the lost self-sufficiency of poetic images within the conditions of the present time" were obviously doomed to failure. At best there remained to art to show how a young hero who had dreamt of "making a breach in the established order of things, of transforming and improving the world" in the end "becomes mature, finds his place with his desires and opinions in the existing conditions and their rationality, in the interconnection of the world and acquires a suitable point of view". Nor is the purpose achieved by another variant: renunciation of the struggle and withdrawal of the individual into the subjective freedom of the spirit. In the aesthetic sense "neither this abstraction of purely formal self-sufficiency nor the fruitless struggle against insurmountable obstacles are genuinely beautiful".

On the basis of these considerations, Hegel set the university students who were listening to him the question, logical after a fashion: In general are works artistic in the full sense of the word if they fail to reveal the individual wholeness, the vivid self-sufficiency of man? Are we right

to call art by that name if it is unable to go beyond the limits of a prosaic way of life devoid of any ideal? And his answer was: "If we have in view the concept of a work of art properly so called in the sense of the ideal... the works of our present stage must fall short of the mark."

Thus, in Hegel's opinion, contemporary art had reached an impasse, and was in the grip of an insoluble contradiction. By its very nature, art cannot fail to reflect the aesthetic ideal, the ideal of "freedom underlying the concept of beauty". But this ideal is clearly unattainable inasmuch as it is inseparably linked to the unreturnable "heroic condition of the world". Consequently, art is doomed, it is also a bygone phase in the history of man. In the world of all-embracing rationalism and man's total dependence, it is philosophy that takes over from art the torch of "spiritual freedom".

2

Please forgive me for the rather long-drawn-out "lesson from Hegel", but it really is a lesson which gives us much food for thought.

What is the significance of Hegel's concepts of a heroic or prosaic condition of the world when considered in their social and historical context? What governs the passage from one to the other? Why did Hegel's forecast concerning the future of art, though apparently fully justified, turn out to be inaccurate?

In 1845 the young Marx and Engels were working enthusiastically on *The German Ideology*. This was their first attempt to give a comprehensive interpretation of the basic features of the new understanding of the world structure. And it is not by chance that in this joint

work of the founders of Marxism we find a sharp inner dispute with the social and historical concepts of Hegel side by side with consistent development of his dialectic method.

Marx and Engels could not fail to feel sympathetic towards Hegel's aesthetic criticism of the existing social relations, bourgeois relations complicated more or less by the legacy of feudalism. Moreover, Marx and Engels repeated and developed on a new materialistic basis Hegel's principle of the glaring disparity between the ideal and the reality, between man's tremendous creative abilities and their practical fulfilment. But whereas Hegel, unfaithful to his own dialectics, said "stop!" to the further development of society, whereas, according to his philosophical construction, the world was to remain within the limits of a "developed civic" (i.e., "bourgeois") social structure, Marx and Engels, on the contrary, in their work, were already making a decisive theoretical step beyond the bounds of the existing "prosaic condition of the world". They revealed the history of human society to be an uninterrupted forward process, the driving force of which is unhaltable improvement, knowing no final limits, of the productive forces.

The authors of *The German Ideology* paid attention to the historic character of the very idea of the conditions of life as fetters preventing the free development of the individual. Man blames the past for his frustration of today and thinks that such conditions always existed. But that is not so. At a certain stage, "the conditions under which individuals have intercourse with each other... are conditions appertaining to their individuality, in no way external to them... are thus conditions of their self-activity and are pro-

among the unbelievably complex interweaving of historical phenomena and to discover the connecting link between the socio-economic formations, each of which signifies a step forward in the development of the productive forces, and hence in the creative forces of the individual "corresponding ... to the advanced mode of the self-activity of individuals".⁵ And depending on the stage in its development a social "organism" is passing through, man feels himself to be either a "creating man" or a "man created", he is either a many-sided complete personality, or an accidental individual living on the crumbs of values, requirements and interests that fall to his lot. "The difference between the individual as a person and what is accidental to him"—says *The German Ideology*—"is not only a conceptual difference but a historical fact."⁶

Marx and Engels do not consider the historical dialectics of the formation of the personality only from the standpoint of the development of each socio-economic formation. In their view, the whole of history is a sort of loop in the spiral of man's arduous and contradictory but forward development. The lower segment of this spiral is the "primeval wholeness" of man, which is explained by the fact that he "has not yet cultivated his relationships to the full", has not yet isolated himself from the material and spiritual environment he has created. The second stage is the tendency towards the "total self-ravaging" of the individual as the inevitable result of the capitalist social relations and of the capitalist division of labour. Instead of personal dependence, . . . "sm placed "materialistic links" which . . . instead of actual commonness or "y", the alienation of the individual

far been imposed upon them as a completely alien power and have ruled them."¹² The highest aim of the communist revolution is to make "impossible all that exists independently of individuals", "to achieve one's full, no longer limited, self-activity, which consists in the appropriation of the totality of the productive forces and the consequent development of the totality of abilities".¹³ This is the only society in which "the original and free development of individuals ceases to be a mere phrase".¹⁴

Marxism's theoretical solution in the middle of the 19th century of "the enigma of history" was, at the same time, a solution to "the enigma of art", which Hegel discovered but considered to be historically exhausted.

The proof that the "prosaic condition of the world" was by no means eternal, and that with the defeat of capitalism, a boundless field of social creativity would open before mankind nullified Hegel's prognosis on the further development of art and established on a firm scientific foundation another, more optimistic view of artistic development.

3

Having examined how the problem of art was posed and solved on the summits of aesthetic and social theory, we naturally turn our attention now to the practice of art itself. In what way did the delicate seismograph of art react to the change—as irresistible as a geological upheaval—in the living conditions of the individual? How did the "private individual"—the man in the new stage of development of bourgeois society—mark his appearance in art?

The heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies and chronicles were conditioned by the circumstances of the great universal plan—they were dealing with the very basis of the existing world order. Events, in their turn, depended on character, and were determined by freely chosen aims of life. The tragedy of King Lear, for example, is a tragedy of downtrodden humanism, a clash between the powers of good and evil, and not simply a description of court intrigue or the drama of a deceived father.

The beginning of the 17th century was marked, however, by the appearance of two great madmen—Hamlet and Don Quixote, who went beyond the bounds of the traditional epic characters and were forerunners to the heroes and collisions of the new era. Hamlet and Don Quixote face the same kind of world, which develops according to its own laws and exists apart from and in spite of their wills; the only difference is in how each of them reacts to the world. The tragicomedy of Don Quixote consists in that he "did not notice that the world had changed", that he felt and acted as though the heroic character of the past still remained master of the course of events. The wholeness of the character is preserved only because of this "quixoticism"—the hero's living in a world of illusions. The tragedy of Hamlet is one of split personality, the hero's loss of the ability to answer the call of duty automatically, without thinking, and on the contrary, the penalty for the sober realisation of the bitter truth that the world exists of itself and develops according to its own laws, and man must measure his exertions according to his practical possibilities. Hamlet is a Don Quixote who has suddenly revealed the imbalance between the

forces of good and evil and the hopeless inadequacy of his chances of combating this evil. In the end, Don Quixote's eyes are opened and he realises the futility of his heroic efforts. Hamlet, on the other hand, charges into the thick of a hopeless battle with his sword at full tilt.

Let us turn a few more pages in the history of man's personality and culture, and take a look at the end of the 18th century. In 1781, young Schiller—a child of the *Sturm und Drang* era in Germany, and a contemporary of the French Revolution—published a drama called *Die Räuber* (The Robbers). In this he was consciously following in the footsteps of Cervantes and Shakespeare, desiring to create a "true-to-life and whole man".¹² But how successful was he in achieving his objective?

Karl Moor does not wish to "work like an ant" nor have all the "mouse-like fuss" of people. He grieves that people clog up their healthy nature with insipid conventions. He is passionate in his condemnation of the outgoing 18th century—"Fie, fie upon the flabby castrated century of eunuchs which is no use for anything but ruminating on feasts of old times, abusing the heroes of antiquity in commentaries and botching them in tragedies!" But what about Karl himself? Must he recognise the authority of this "flabby century", act in accordance with the countless written and unwritten prescriptions? No, not at all. "Must I press my body in corsets and truss my will with laws? The law has made a snake's crawl out of what would have become an eagle's flight! The law never made a great man, but freedom can breed giants and passionate outbursts."¹³ Karl decides to accept, as the only way out, the sug-

gestion that he should become the leader of a band of robbers. "What a fool I was! My spirit yearned for seats, my breath for freedom! Murderers, robbers!—with these words I trample on the law." 14

Hegel had already pointed out the unrelatable and hopeless way in which Schiller "excluded" Karl from the prosaic way of life and created special circumstances for him. The Russian critic Dmitry Pisarev also considered Schiller's treatment of the other Moor as artificial—"Unable to understand the personality of man without creative aspirations," writes Pisarev, "he endowed with these aspirations the unsavoury character of Franz. And that is the reason why, instead of turning out a banal gentleman who wanted warmth without burning, he became a hero of evil, a demon of destruction, a titanic and fantastic creature."¹⁵ This is, then, artistic consciousness in inertia, reluctant as yet to take reality as it is, stubbornly measuring it according to former ideas of the scope and possibilities of the individual. Art itself thus played the part of the noble hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha!

Taking into account this tendency, which continued through into the romantic trends of the early 19th century, the title of Balzac's novel *Illusions perdues* (Lost Illusions) (1843) was truly symbolic. Literature had taken a decisive step towards recognising reality and had inscribed on its banner a call for unconventional reality in relations, characters, action and plot.

Balzac's hero—Lucien de Rubempré—is a naive young provincial who comes to Paris, and, from the moment he sets foot in the capital, "he had seen things as they are": a world of general venality, a mad-race for social rank and fortune.

"For the past two hours the word money had been sounding in Lucien's ears as the solution of every difficulty. In the theatre as in the publishing trade, and in the publishing trade as in the newspaper office—it was everywhere the same; there was not a word of art or of glory. The steady beat of the great pendulum, Money, seemed to fall like hammer-strokes on his heart and brain."

And the minting machines continued to pound away, but *Lucien*, unlike *Hamlet* or *Don Quixote*, did not dream of charging into battle with Parisian corruption, or cursing this mercenary century, or even escaping from the cynicism of people to the Bois de Boulogne. He was "far from shuddering at the sight", on the contrary, he soon showed that "among wolves he could live like a wolf". *Lucien* becomes part and parcel of mercenary bourgeois society, abiding by its laws and frenziedly reaching out for his slice of the cake.

Let us pass over a few decades to 1876 when, to the indignant cries of the bourgeoisie, Zola's *L'Assommoir* (The Dramshop) began to appear in the French paper *Le Bien public*. The leit-motif of the story is the dream of *Gervaise*, a Parisian laundrygirl, "to work, to eat, to live in one's own place, to bring up children, not to be beaten, and to die in one's own bed". *Gervaise*—hard-working, conscientious and kind—almost seems at one time to be within the reach of her simple dream, but the still in the *Père Colombe*'s dramshop begins to play its part. Her husband becomes an alcoholic, and the iron bonds of want are drawn ever tighter. Her daughter becomes a prostitute, and *Gervaise* herself finally dies on dirty rags in a cubby-hole under the stairs in *L'Assommoir*.

Zola said he wanted to "portray the inevitable degeneration of a working family in the poisonous environment of our suburbs". "My characters are not bad people, they are only ignorant and spoilt by the environment of hard work and misery in which they live."

"Environment"—repeated twice in this short comment of the author—is a word that is significant throughout the whole book. The vivid description of this environment—of the habitués of cafés and laundries in Parisian slums—shows it to be something that envelops man, predetermines his behaviour and renders hopeless his efforts to escape from the clutches of drunkenness, brawling, humiliation and want. Human thought is powerless to pierce the solid darkness of these living conditions; the individual is humiliated and crippled spiritually, still more than physically. *L'Assommoir*—the title is again a symbol showing the state of man at the decline of bourgeois civilisation.

Let us turn, finally, to the early nineteen-twenties, when the impoverished, sick and almost blind James Joyce was completing in Paris his monumental novel *Ulysses*—the main work of his life, and the epopee of artistic decadence.

The hero of naturalism, according to Saltykov-Shchedrin, had already grown into a most peculiar phenomenon, the most important part of him, perhaps, being the trunk. Joyce's character, Leopold Bloom, is a creature who lacks an inner core, around which a personality could be formed, and his character is still more fatal. His spiritual world is shattered into a thousand pieces, and it even seems as if the limbs of his body acquire a fantastic disjointed kind of independence, functioning without any kind of co-ordination. Spir-

tually, Bloom is a prisoner of the phenomena and objects around him and it is only under their impulse that he has any ideas or thoughts. Here again is the "alienated" individual—recreated by a peculiar, unrealistic form of art.

I have outlined more than three hundred years of artistic development—from King Lear down to the advertising agent of the London newspaper *Free Man and National Press*—Mr. Leopold Bloom. And maybe even this very brief survey reveals how, with a change in both objective reality and social consciousness under the bourgeois system, the mirror of art was also transformed and the relationship between art and reality was changed.

It is interesting to note that one of the main tendencies of creative art over several centuries was non-acceptance of a reality which debased man to the role of a silent cog in the social machine and made him either a victim of circumstances or a beast of prey that achieves its aims at the expense of its own kind.

For a certain time this non-acceptance was expressed by a selective attitude of art towards reality, by a search for circumstances and collisions which provided a possibility for direct portrayal of "ideal" characters and relationships, for the immediate assertion of "the freedom underlying the concept of beauty". This led to the creation of lasting gems of romantic art. It also led the artist away from the real troubles of the real individual eventually to a sort of extreme aesthetic self-limitation.

In the first third of the nineteenth century, all forms of art underwent an abrupt transformation, accommodating their means of expression to the new "condition of the world" and to the new

feature of social consciousness. This transformation resulted in recognition of reality, and in the elaboration of other, more complex, ways of expressing the aesthetic ideal. Art made its own the infinite diversity of existing phenomena and was able to deal with even the most anti-ideal characters and relationships, because reality was assessed, one way or another, from a different, more elevated point of view, always bringing out "what should be". In Gogol's famous tale *The Greatcoat* there is only one character—an insignificant clerk, Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, and yet the author unfolds this banal story in such a subtle way that there is invisibly present the image of what man could and should be if only his conditions of life did not deprive him of everything human.

Realism is inseparable from recognition that man's character is determined by his environment and by the circumstances of his life and activity. From this emerges another basic feature of realism —the belief that with a change in environment and conditions, in the future man will be able to regain his lost rights and abilities. It was this belief that supported the anti-bourgeois trend of realist art and provided its optimistic tone in art's quests into the cruel picture of the surrounding world.

But this kind of instinctive optimism could only provide a support for art for a certain time. The relentlessness of life led the artist to a dilemma, which had already been postulated in aesthetic theory at the beginning of the 19th century. If the artist was not able to find in reality tendencies, phenomena and forces which would lead to the regeneration of human personality, then he had to admit that the traditional ideal of classical art

had exhausted its possibilities. And long before the world was divided into two opposite socio-economic systems, there was already a profound dividing line separating art into different trends.

This crisis in humanistic ideals which had emerged out of the bourgeois system, caused diverse and considerable upheavals in all areas of art at the turn of the century. The compass of art, which had always had its north and south clearly shown and had always been able to hold course for creative man in spite of any changes of circumstances, suddenly lost its orientation. The aesthetic ideal is a fiction if man is completely lost within himself, and if the world is, was, and always will be without change. Character is a nonsense since the alienated individual is indistinguishable from his own kind. Even the plot becomes a survival of hoary antiquity, for there is no "development of the action" if nothing takes place. The question of time and place does not arise, since, for the existence of contemporary man, the only realities are "here and now".... This is the logic of art in decadence from its appearance to our time, and it is indeed logical if we take into consideration the fact that it arises from complete lack of social perspective.

It is curious to note that even the part of art which has split up into various decadent schools, cannot do without an aesthetic ideal. The image of the future, the image of a harmonious and whole personality, still emerges inevitably, even in works that bear the stamp of decadence, but in an unusual role, as an object of negation and decay. As one Soviet art specialist has said, decadent art "shines with a light which is not its own of a shattered aesthetic ideal" and

even its emotional influence lies in the fact that this shattering entails a "negative aesthetic effect".¹⁶

The mainstream, the principal tendency of art began, passionately and purposefully, to seek support for the recreation of the whole and harmonious personality. It is quite natural that, from the outset, artists looked to socialism, for there was not, and could not be, any other way out of the impasse of bourgeois civilisation. There is no need to delve into the questions of what this socialism was like, especially in its early stages, and how the progress of social and artistic development overcame all kinds of false conceptions. It is important to note that the ideal of socialism was to be found on the main road of human society's development, that it was associated by the artist with profound transformation in existing relationships. Not being familiar with the scientific conclusions of Marxism, art had to grope and discover—if not those same revolutionary conclusions—at least the same direction, the same historical orientation.

The young romantic composer Richard Wagner made one of the first attempts to combine the aesthetic ideal with socialist ethics and thought. He wrote that from ancient times "art was never the free expression of a free community": it was the servant of religion, the subject of despotism, a victim of the money-bags. In Wagner's opinion, the task of the anti-capitalist revolution was to repair the shattered links between the world of man and the world of art. "Only on the shoulders of our great social movement can true art rise out of its state of civilised barbarism. It has its aim in common with this movement and neither of them can achieve this aim unless they recog-

nise it jointly. This purpose is the strength and beauty of man: may the revolution give him strength, and art beauty."¹⁷

In one way or another the Russian revolutionary democrats pinned their hopes on socialism—Belinsky, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Nekrasov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, and in the West, besides Weerth and Pottier, there were Shelley, Heine, George Sand, and, later, Shaw, Jack London, Anatole France, and Romain Rolland. And in the end Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky chose this path, hesitating between believing and doubting, approaching the ideals of socialism with mixed feelings of attraction and repulsion. The work of these and many other artists acted as a bridge between the period of "old" classical realism and the realism of the 20th century, and brought art to the very threshold of a truly socialist culture.

4

There was a clear reason for using Hegel as the starting point for this thesis. I see the first foundation of the distinctive features of socialist art—whatever name we give it—in the new "condition of the world" which began to make itself felt at the end of the 19th century and then became a most brilliant and integral part of the reality of the 20th century. Art began again to work on the epic scale, and to produce once again the "strong and whole heroic character", to return the artistic culture in a way to traditions and experience of the long-forgotten past, while preserving the enormous ideological and aesthetic achievements and possibilities of 19th-century realism. This was the outcome of the great social upswing

in the struggle for socialism, for the transformation of human relations on new, communist principles.

Let us recall what the world was like in the 1890s. Capitalism, sober, cynical, all-pervading, not yet having suffered any really profound shocks, was rushing ahead at full speed. The great European powers were seizing the last remaining territories in other continents, exercising, with violence and bribery, their colonial mission of "civilisation". Russia was going through a socio-economic revolution which would finally put the country on the road to capitalism. Life seemed to hold no promise for the future. Only the truly emotionally artistic ear could detect in the cacophony of world events the major strains which heralded the great purifying storm.

"How I would like to convey all the joy, all the tokens of approaching spring, which I can sense in life around me,"¹³ wrote Tolstoi in the early 1890s. "It is a joy to live at such a time!" he said a little later, in March 1895. "Life is not just getting warm, it is already on the boil. And you will not have time to look round before it overflows in a boiling wave, cleanses itself and settles in a new, different and better form"¹⁴

This mood was also conveyed in the plays of Chekhov at the end of the 19th century. "A new age is dawning, the people are marching on us all, a powerful, health-giving storm is gathering, it is drawing near, soon it will be upon us and it will drive away laziness, indifference, the prejudice against labour, and rotten dullness from our society." So speaks one of Chekhov's characters in *The Three Sisters* (1900).

From the very beginning of the twentieth century, the vista of "social movement" that

Wagner described became a reality. Marxism brought this out of the realm of utopia and made it a reality. Its implementation was not a matter of abstract moral categories, but of the actual tendencies and requirements of historical development. And art, borne on the shoulders of this great social movement, could not fail to undergo deep internal changes.

The "powerful, health-giving storm" that was about to descend on Russia and the whole world formed within its depths the brilliant vital talent of Maxim Gorky. He realised, sooner than anyone else, that this mood of upswing, which at first was as it were dissolved in the atmosphere, as though subsisting without any visible support, was being nourished by the constructive energy of the people. In his book *Foma Gordeyev* (1899) Gorky wrote: "... lurked an enormous force, an irrepressible force that was not yet aware of itself and so had not yet formed clear aims and purposes". Gorky was one of the first artists to reflect the rapid process of spiritual rejuvenation and political enlightenment amongst the working classes. He brought a new hero into the picture and fused socialism with the aesthetic ideal.

"I have welcomed the new century in an excellent way," Gorky wrote to Pyatnitsky, in January 1901, "in the company of vigorous, robust, 'ful people. They are our real guarantee that the new century will indeed be the century of spiritual renewal. Faith is a mighty force, and they believe in the indestructibility of their ideal, and in their strength to march firmly towards it. All of them will perish on the way, and fortune will smile on few of them: many will experience great suffering, many people will perish, but the earth will give birth to still more to take their place,

and in the end, beauty and justice will triumph, man's highest aspirations will triumph."²⁰

Reading through this forecast of the future, which at the time was not intended for publication, I think about the seventy years of the 20th century. The historical experience accumulated during this period is immense, and in many respects tragic and harsh. Two very cruel wars, leaving in their wake tens of millions of dead. The threat of a third world war, the scale of which would eclipse all others. The ever-growing capacity of the so-called "consumer society" to churn out on the conveyor belt of propaganda, advertising and mass culture the tastes, habits and views of millions of people and to make man an appendage of material things, a cog in the uninterrupted circulation of capital and material resources.

But it is not enough to say that the 20th century has demonstrated new aspects in the process of man's alienation and weakening and the multitude of dangers that surround him. The greatest truth of the 20th century is that the most "unmovable" continents had been made to move, and that the most "unshakeable" social principles have been shaken. It has demonstrated man's tremendous powers of resistance to the most unfavourable circumstances and the boundless creative talent that is revealed in the popular masses when inspired by high ideals. Each of the events of the 20th century taken in isolation could be interpreted as a coincidence, the result of a concurrence of circumstances. Taken all together, these events show how—throughout the ebb and flow of social movement, wars, revolutions, daring exploits and temporary defeats, experiments and tragic mistakes—the need makes itself felt for a

deep transformation of human relations to make them correspond to the tremendous scientific and technical possibilities which are opening up for mankind. However we define the 20th century—as the age of nuclear energy, of automation, of synthetics, or of space conquest—the most profound and accurate social definition remains that of Gorky: "the century of spiritual renovation".

The great era of socialist transformation, of course, includes many different historical phases. The peaks in the history of Soviet society are, for example, the Revolution and the years of the Civil War, the great leap forward in socialist construction during the first five-year plan, and the Second World War. Likewise, in the history of the emergence and development of socialist art and culture, there are periods of advance and retreat, there are years of particularly intensive creative quests and development of what has been discovered, of gradual accumulation of new qualities. In order to understand all these processes, it is vitally important to take the concrete historical approach, studying in detail each phase and its role in the development of literature and art. This is how the writers of preceding articles pursued their research. I suggest a survey of the main features of Soviet art and culture, features determined in the final analysis by the recreation of the "heroic condition of the world" on a new social and historical basis.

In the first memoirs of the Revolution—by John Reed—we are presented with the picture of a shaken world, a world in which absolutely everything—customs, attitudes, outlooks, "the bonds of law and order"—were being shaken. Everything was in a process of demolition and reconstruction. "Vast Russia was in a state of solution," writes

John Reed, "...human society flowed molten in primal heat, and from the tossing sea of flame was emerging the class struggle, stark and pitiless—and the fragile, slowly-cooling crust of new planets...."

Many writers and artists who experienced these events compared the great historical cataclysm with the most terrifying natural phenomena. "Now everything is shifting—the whole world—like an earthquake,"²¹ says Lunacharsky. We read in Alexei Tolstoi: "The hurricane of revolution swept over the land. It reached up to the heavens. It scattered embers over the earth."²² "In our time," Gorky wrote, "man is exposed to the most diverse influences of the powerful whirlwind of reality"²³

In works on the Revolution and the Civil War there is no settled, cosy or orderly life. The shift away from former attitudes is expressed partly in the mobility of the characters and of the masses, in the displacements of enormous crowds. In Alexander Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood* we see Kozbukh's motley army advancing across the sun-scorched steppes, leaving their homes far behind. In *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokhov, the cossack corn-grower Grigory Melekhov travels thousands of miles in front-line action, and "home" for him is only a tiny dot in the vast and turbulent world he knows. Scattered throughout a land in the throes of revolution are the heroes of Alexei Tolstoi's book *The Ordeal*. Fighting their way across the vast expanses of the land are the heroes of the new works by Soviet writers on the Revolution and the Civil War—Konstantin Fedin, Mikhail Stelmakh, Sergei Zalysin.

"The powerful whirlwind of reality" is not only a peculiarity of the years immediately fol-

lowing the October Revolution, when new-born socialism was battling for the right to survive. After hardly an interval made necessary by the ravages, famine and wounds of many years of war, the land began to seethe again and charged forward.

One of the best novels on the construction of socialism is Alexander Malyshkin's *The People from Backwater*. It tells of life in the cities in the throes of a mighty labour upsurge, and of the countryside where "everything was in turmoil again, just as in 1918". "The whole of Russia is on the move!" cries one of the characters, watching the crowds clambering on to long-distance trains in the station. "Everybody: the old, the young, the family-man, the homeless; something moved them, stirred them from their homes—but where to? They went, seekers with unfailing courage, a multitude anonymous and silent.

"Their train was enveloped in hazy dreams of construction sites, of towns where earnings were big, in hope, in obscurity. Behind, Moscow was aglow, and from it flew sparks which whirled and crackled across the countryside and the whole region. And from the train window one could see what tomorrow would bring."

Nineteen forty-one was another year of upheaval for millions of people. "Wake up, my great country!" says a grim song written in the early days of the war. And the country really did rise to meet the crisis. Countless streams of people went from one point of the compass to another, leaving the comfort of their homes to face the challenge of invasion and answer the call of duty. "Sooty dust, brick dust, yellowish dust, fine grey dust making one's face like a *cupre-cloud*; of dust hang over these roads at the front." Vainly

Grossman describes the terrible summer of 1941 in his short novel *The People Is Immortal*. "...Dust raised by hundreds of thousands of Red Army boots, truck wheels, tank tracks, tractors, guns, flocks of sheep and droves of pigs, the hooves of collective-farm horses..."

"Transports, carts loaded with hay and empty cartridge boxes, ambulance carts and the square structures housing radio transmitters passed...." Boris Gorbatov continues with the same picture in his short novel *The Unconquered*: "... And the whole atmosphere was fraught with alarm, filled with cries and groans, the creaking of cart wheels and the clank of metal; and it seemed as if the road itself were creaking and groaning under the wheels and rushing past in fright between the hillsides." And, again, Alexander Fadeyev says in his novel *The Young Guard*: "Not since the days of the great popular migration had the Donets steppe witnessed such a movement of people ... As they went they trampled the ripe and ripening corn and no one grieved, neither he that trampled it down nor he who had sown it ...

"The air was so filled with dust that you could look at the sun without squinting."

And so we find here all the inalienable features of the heroic age—as Hegel understood it. The world ablaze in the "fire of creation", the world buffeted by the "powerful whirlwind" of the socialist revolution and the grim days of war. And it is not only a question of thousands and thousands of people leaving the comfort and familiarity of their homes, filling the trains and trudging along the dusty roads of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The question is that this movement was inspired in the long run by a great humanistic emotion, that countless people found

themselves at this time directly and in person on the roads of history. The objectives were to establish a new system by overcoming the bitter opposition of enemies within and without, to lay the foundations for a socialist industry by completing the five-year plan in four years, and to drive back and destroy the fascist hordes who were threatening the future of mankind and the very existence of the nations. The fact that these objectives were achieved is of tremendous significance to all humanity and affected the fate of the whole world.

Even in the earlier phases in the struggle for socialism, Lenin remarked that the people were filled with a "revolutionary energy . . . to a degree perhaps never before known in history".²⁴ This untapped energy to create and to fight came to the surface in the revolutionary uprising of the working people against tsarism in 1905. As Lenin said after that "dress rehearsal" for the battle that was to come, "at no other time are the mass of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order, as at a time of revolution. At such times the people are capable of performing miracles. . . ."²⁵

At the same time, a basic feature of socialism is the permanence of the immediate self-activity of the masses, which functions not only during the period when the new social relations are being formed. It is only socialism, writes Lenin, that can provide the opportunity for "drawing the majority of working people into a field of labour in which they can display their abilities, develop . . . capacities, and reveal talents. . . ."²⁶ Only socialism "leads the working people on to the road of the independent creation of a new life".²⁷ Only socialism creates conditions whereby "not the minority, not the rich alone, not the educated alone,

but the real people, the vast majority of the working people, are *themselves* building a new life, are *by their own experience* solving the most difficult problems of socialist organisation".²⁸

One of the most important and impressive features of the Revolution as described by writers at the time is the enormous political activity at the lower levels. These people had taken the destiny of their country, and of the world, into their own hands and now had to do their utmost to understand and resolve everything.

Very symbolic of this is John Reed's description of a meeting in the armoured regiment—one of the key units of the Petersburg garrison. In the great Mikhailovsky Riding-School, the orators stand on the roof of an armoured car, in the dim light of a lantern—a smart, eloquent lieutenant, a delegate from the front, a Menshevik "defence-of-the-fatherland" supporter, a Petrograd worker, a Member of the Duma. They all stand up in turn, with their rousing, rallying speeches, calling on the soldiers to follow them. "Never have I seen men trying so hard to understand, to decide. They never moved, stood staring with a sort of terrible intentness at the speaker, their brows wrinkled with the effort of thought, sweat standing out on their foreheads; great giants of men with the innocent clear eyes of children and the faces of epic warriors. . . . For the moment they were lifted out of the ordinary run of common thoughts, thinking in terms of Russia, of socialism, the world, as if it depended on them whether the Revolution were to live or die. . . ." Then, after a speech by the People's Commissar of War, Krylenko—who had not slept for four nights—the great crowd swung to the left: against neutrality, for participation in the Revolution on the side of the Bolsheviks.

covery of the relativity of time, the smooth and calm passage of time became a torrent. "War has given history momentum and it is now flying with locomotive speed,"²⁹ wrote Lenin. "...The pace of social development in the past five years has been positively staggering..."³⁰—he said a little later in 1922. "Unprecedented changes and upheavals", as Blok put it, overtook the country and the whole world, transforming the universe before our very eyes. And all these objective changes in the conditions of man's life, in the relations between the individual and society, naturally exerted a powerful influence on art and culture, making their comprehensive enrichment and development imperative.

5

As we have already seen, the general tendency in the development of art during the second phase in the history of capitalism, that of its decline, consisted in the gradual weakening of the epic principle. The crisis of art became above all the crisis of its generalising, synthesising abilities, and was manifested in the weakening and eventually the complete loss of that lofty artistic vision thanks to which art conveys the movement of life.

On the contrary, the main element that socialist art brought into the world was the recreation of the artistic epos. In fact, the epic breadth with which art reflects reality was enabled to become and did indeed become the aesthetic equivalent of the unusual mobility of circumstances, of the massive nature of the revolutionary struggle, the extension of the field of social creativity, and the acceleration of historical development.

The art of socialism was formed at a time when

history was revealing its innermost secrets and laying bare the "main arteries of law".³¹ Like a flash of lightning, the socialist revolution lit up the past, present and future, and gave meaning to all the searching, suffering and death of the past. Not only the theoretician and the scientist, but everyone who had experienced those events, began to feel that life was a directed process, whose aim was classless communist society. The measure of everyday consciousness ceased to be a filter letting through only the trivialities of daily life, only what is going on "here" and "now"; it was opened to perceive phenomena on a massive scale, and seemed to obtain access to the most distant perspectives, the basic problems of life.

In books, plays and films, history broke through the traditional themes of the domestic drama and the peripetia of private lives. It began to create its own subjects, plots and dénouement, drawing together the most diverse characters, the most diverse ways of life. The revelation of "the main arteries of law" allowed the artist to show from a single point of view, to gather together the vast material of life and penetrate without fear into the apparent chaos of the world and to the very core of events of the past and present.

It was socialist art that was able to create the genuine historical epos of the twentieth century. I have in mind Alexei Tolstoi's *Peter the First*, Mukhtar Auezov's *Abai*, Yuri Tynyanov's splendid works on the life and times of Pushkin, and many other works on the history of our country and the world. It is typical that the works about events witnessed and experienced by Soviet writers were in the form of historical accounts of the difficult, dramatic and stirring birth of a new world. The finest work of this kind is Mikhail Sholokhov's

epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*—the most comprehensive picture of life during this great turn of history.

It would be possible to go into detailed discussion of the various phases of Soviet art, when its epic characteristics were more or less apparent—but in the long run, the heroic and epic tradition is always at the core of its history and is refracted through all the various art forms. Obvious examples of this are Shostakovich's recently completed 14th Symphony, Khachaturyan's ballet *Spartacus*, Korzhev's triptych *The Communists*, and the memorial complex in Salaspils by a group of Latvian sculptors.

The innovative contribution of Soviet art to world culture is based, above all, on its new hero—the creative man who is changing himself as he transforms his environment.

Such heroes appeared first, as we know, in the work of Gorky. The hero-narrator in his cycle of stories *Around Russia* and his autobiographical trilogy "collects" his own personality and rises to awareness of the aims of his whole nation and the whole of mankind, in the atmosphere of an impending storm. After the Revolution, many masters in the various art forms followed the path blazed by Gorky in creating this new character. In the cinema, we should mention Eisenstein's famous *Battleship Potemkin*, Pudovkin's *Moika*, and trilogy of Maxim by Kozintsev and Trauberg; in the theatre, Ivanov's *Armoured Train 14-69*, and Trenyov's *Lyubov Yarovaya*; in literature, Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*, and many other works in which attention centres on the formative process and growth of the heroic personality in the revolutionary struggle and socialist construction.

In Malyshkin's novel, *The People from Backwater*, "the anonymous and silent" go to the construction site of a giant steelworks. One of these silent people is Zhurkin, a coffin-maker. He had left nothing behind except the foul taste of a "dismal, petty, hopeless life" of a craftsman working alone. The only joy in his life was a beautifully-made coffin. "It had been made in snatches of spare time, in minutes free from rough, irksome work, and the wearied master-craftsman—forgotten by fate—had rejoiced over it and maybe even wept."

The time came, however, when the latent talents of the Zhurkins, formerly repressed by fate, were put to a different use. One of the chiefs on the site, Podoprígora—a former artilleryman—had felt "the pressure building up over the years, like gases under full compression in a gun-barrel before firing". Millions had long awaited "this time and these events", "the years had piled up on top of one another and were ready to burst". Podoprígora saw his entire function on the site as one of converting the *casual labourers*—driven here by their personal cares and need—into conscious construction workers. "Conscious people are those who can see their objective—where they are going and why. You need one thing, only one: for all to understand together, to look ahead, beyond the present day." "Iron and machinery," says Podoprígora. "What are they for? For man to achieve an easier and happier future."

Zhurkin, the former coffin-maker, who had left his home and gone away to earn his living, languished waiting for work on the hard bunk of the construction-site barracks: he was far from being able to grasp and assimilate these ideal motives. At that time his needs were very simple.

he wanted work, and he wanted his daily "pose" of bread. He also longed for a sense of security in his life. And it turned out that the Communist Party was becoming more and more the bulwark of this security, "labouring and toiling everywhere" with the concentrated strength of a common cause, "uniting all around and leading all the people with increasing vigour and efficiency".

With a child-like timidity, Zhurkin crossed the threshold of the carpenters' shop, as though he had never had tools in his hands before. At a very early age he set out to learn to walk, to watch, and to work as a fully-fledged member of a working community and a participant in the task, sanctified by lofty aims. Little by little he was gripped by the urgent speed of the construction site and moved by that "heroic and glorious feeling" which bound the workers together and finally made the construction workers "feel" the unexpected to him new concern for the people, makes this taciturn man suggest the formation of a voluntary fire-brigade. And when himself is selected to organise this, he even more as a man "new-born, a man of revolution", a conscious builder, begins to understand where he is going and why.

In the words of Marx and Engels, immemorial, "there had been a division between self-activity and the production of material wealth. Capitalism led them to an even sharper division. The only way by which the individual can still unite his productive strength and his individual existence, was work, but from the moment when work removed all sense of self-activity, and remained in their life was what crippled man in communist society is it possible

all the talents of a captain, can only do one thing: die as a propagandist.

"Life was impossible"—we read in *The Unconquered*—"there was no law. There was no court, no right, no order, no system. There were only orders, and each order was a threat." "How to live? It was impossible to ignore the question, impossible to just say, 'That's none of our business!' Everyone in the city was faced with the same question—How to live? What to do? And everyone had to answer it for himself and for his conscience."

The war ended in victory because millions of people in factories, at the front and in occupied territory made their choice—their only choice—to fight the invading enemy. And again, a tremendous all-out effort was needed to rebuild the war-devastated land and to snap out of the vicious circle of destruction, need, all kinds of shortages. In A. Saltykov's film *The Chairman* we see Yegor Trubnikov as a man who takes on this task in one of the thousands of villages which suffered the ravages of war. Just like Vasily Gubanov and Gleb Chumakov he does not spare himself in the struggle against seemingly insuperable obstacles.

The great single-mindedness of the heroic personality, his absorption with one cause, one decisive task in life, may sometimes appear to be very one-sided. But this—of course—is not so. The heroic character is distinguished not by its narrowness, but by its breadth, and by its ability to extend its consciousness and feelings to all that is happening, to see the smallest details of life in the light of the ideal, from the standpoint of attaining historic objectives. Here we have a rigorism not dependent on a dogma or spirit of sacrifice, but on a profound reappraisal of values made

The hero of contemporary Soviet art is in a moment of great social upsurge, in conditions which do not usually require same kind of self-denial, the same heroic virtue as were demanded in other periods of history. This leads to a great increase in the variety and complexity of contemporary reality. Under these conditions and problems, with the new contradictions and difficulties, with the new social development, what is the hero? This is focused on analysing the new vital problems of recent years we find that artistic works of recent years we find that artistic and the features of life Soviet man, and the new social conditions further social development is bound to a great increase in the variety and complexity of contemporary reality.

We must remember, above all, that there are numerous interactions between all the "arts" of artistic culture—from Gorky to Arutyunyan to those great moments in history, artistry is remarkable. Again and again, Society is faced day. The scale and depth of artistic activity of the world and in the country the decisive action of each man can be decisive. The heroic does not necessarily present temporarily become society. Even the hero is linked with the history atmosphere of most peaceful and ordinary work of Soviet people "from and whose heroic characters". Even

science Academician Dronov, in Alyoshin's play *The People Inherit All* and in Natanson's film are our contemporaries. These people feel responsible for the course of world events and are engrossed in resolving problems which affect every man in one way or another. The line of succession is clearly traced in Raizman's film *Your Contemporary*. Here is Vasily Vasilyevich Gubanov—son of the famous father Gubanov who was felling trees to save the population of a starving town during the cruel upheaval of the Civil War. Obviously Gubanov junior lives and works under totally different conditions, and is preoccupied with other problems. But the solution of the problems which face this hero—for example to prevent a plant being constructed to an out-of-date blueprint—demand the same self-denial, conviction, principledness, passion—the same strength of character that his father displayed.

In Soviet art there is an epic image which remains contemporary at all stages of historic development. This is the image of Lenin—a man in whom the epoch of revolution found its highest humanistic embodiment. This image was first dealt with in the essays of Gorky, the poetry of Tikhonov, Yesenin and Mayakovsky. Then the image of Lenin appeared on the stage in Pogodin's *Man with a Rifle*, and also on the screen, as the greatest figure in the socialist revolution. Art in recent times (Kazakevich's *The Blue Notebook*, Yutkevich's film *Lenin in Poland* and Drabkina's documentary prose *The Winter Pass*) all seek to penetrate the image of Lenin the thinker. Today, as in past decades, the image of Lenin serves as a criterion to assess the ever-changing, ever new features of Soviet art's aesthetic ideal. As in the past, it is by turning to the character, work and

ut of Lenin that the most contemporary
sophical and creative problems of socialism
can be solved.

cialism and art combined present imminent
aspects, points of view, facts, opinions. How-
ever, this aspect, the experience of Soviet art,
isesthetic essence of literature and art.
In this respect, the new epic hero of contemporary culture is an
epic hero of world culture. No se-
nseless research into the peculiarity of 20th-century
literature can disregard its experience.
The very nature of the Soviet artistic
monarchy, dynamism, and its moral atmosphere
provides inexhaustible possibilities for developing
art and culture. And it is not necessary to be a
prophet to foretell that there will be further development
of Soviet art, that socialism will produce
opment in Soviet art, that further development
further artistic treasures as we move ahead into
the last third of the 20th century.

- ⁵ *Uoprosy filosofii* No 11, 1965, p 131
- ⁶ Marx and Engels *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1965, p. 88.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 494, 495
- ⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow, 1959, p. 102
- ⁹ *Uoprosy filosofii* No 10, 1965, p 99
- ¹⁰ *Uoprosy filosofii* No 11, 1965, pp 127, 132
- ¹¹ Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1968, p 495.
- ¹² Friedrich Schiller, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd 2, Aufbau Verlag, Berlin, 1954, S 25.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, S 26.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, S. 38
- ¹⁵ *Russian Writers on Literary Work*, Vol 2, Russ. ed Moscow, 1955, p. 576
- ¹⁶ Y. Davydov, "Aesthetic Ideal and Communism", *Uoprosy estetiki*, (Problems of Aesthetics), (in Russian) Issue 7, Moscow, 1965, p 108
- ¹⁷ R. Wagner, *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, Leipzig, 1849
- ¹⁸ L. Tolstoi, *Collected Works*, Vol 64, Russ. ed., p 302
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 63, p. 62
- ²⁰ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* in 30 vols., Vol 28, Russ. ed., p. 150
- ²¹ A. Lunacharsky, *Collected Works* in 8 vols., Vol 1, Russ. ed., p. 521.
- ²² A. Tolstoi, *On Literature*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1956, p 4.
- ²³ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol 26, Russ. ed., p 77
- ²⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 8, p 448
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 113. *», 1*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, p 404.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 410
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol 28, p 72.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 27, p. 162
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 33, p. 349.
- ³¹ A. Tolstoi, *On Literature*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1956, p 153
- ³² *Uoprosy filosofii* No 11, 1965, pp 131, 132
- ³³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p 423
- ³⁴ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Russ. ed., Vol 26, pp 330, 414, 515
- ³⁵ G. V. Plekhanov, *Works*, Vol 10, Russ. ed., p. 35.

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